

JEEVADHARA

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'MAN' IN THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

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THIS MAN JESUS

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PEOPLE IN THE PROPHETICAL PERSPECTIVE

C. M. Cherian

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THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE PSALMS

Rui de Menezes

THE VARIOUS FACETS OF MAN IN WISDOM LITERATURE

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IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Patrick Crasla

MAN IN THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS

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JEEVADHARA

The Word of God

'MAN' IN THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Editor:

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Editorial

What is 'man'? This is not a simple question arising out of mere curiosity. It is a vital one that touches our own very existence; for on it depends the meaning of our life and death, the reality of our capacity to know and to love, and the final choice of our own existence. The question how we are to understand 'man' and human life is being asked today with a new intensity. In the tumult of our present existence the human spirit is seeking new and better ways of understanding its place and task in the world. Quite different from other sciences, in anthropology 'man' is at the same time the thinking-subject as well as the thought-object.

Shakespeare once exclaimed: "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel!" To a popular scientist man is a composite of chemicals worth a few rupees. To an existentialist philosopher 'man' is a being "thrown into the world", standing before a void. He is in a perpetual striving to fill that void, which is very often a futile attempt. To the Scholastic philosopher 'man' is an embodied spirit. All the same, this spirit and body are one being; he is a unity.

According to Christianity 'man' is a creature of God. He is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-31); he is the high-priest of the creation and its representative before God. His greatness consists in his being the image of God, and his lowliness in his being a creature. There is no dichotomy in 'man'. Gen 2:7 describes the creation of man as a *living being* (*nepes hayyah*) as the result of the breath of life (*nismat hayyim*) he received from God. In the biblical idiom we should not say that 'man' *has* a soul, but rather that he *is* a soul, nor consequently that he *has* a body, but that he *is* a body. Unhampered by the body-soul dichotomy, the Hebrew mind calls this tangible, sensible, expressive and living reality that is 'man', a living soul.

The various aspects which constitute to build up this concept of 'man' in the biblical perspective is the theme of this issue of *Jeevadhara*, and the authors have tried their best

to bring out the characteristics and nuances of this concept. The word 'man' is used in the traditional way as a common noun and to denote this 'man' is often written within inverted commas. Due to lack of space all studies could not be included in this issue, especially one on the Genesis narrative on 'man' and another on Pauline anthropology. C. M. Cherian in his article "People in the Prophetic Perspective" examines the main aspects of the prophetic view of human community in relation to God's plan to create an authentic community through commitment against which stands the formidable obstacle of human rebelliousness. Rui de Menezes in his study on the anthropology of the Psalms tries to show the multifaceted aspects of man in the Psalms, as flesh and spirit, transient and transcendent, "as a creature at the crossroads". R. Vande Walle in his article "The Various facets of man in Wisdom Literature" emphasizes the concept of man as an integral, holistic reality, having many facets characterised by his needs and aspirations, his sensibility and power of perception. Patrick Crasta, in his article "Man in the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels" examines how humans are presented as blind, estranged and ruptured beings, whom Jesus restores and makes 'whole'. "This Man Jesus" is the study of S. Rayan in which the author argues for emphasizing the humanity of Jesus in theology and practical life, as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews did (Hb 5:7-9) and also as the Evangelists tried to illustrate. M. Vellanicka gives a clear exposition of the Johannine message about man. It may be summarised, he says, in Jn 3:16: "God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

The purpose of all these studies is to highlight the concept of humanness as we encounter it in the Bible. At a time when 'humanity' is being discussed at all levels and 'man' becomes the centre of theological reflection so much so that theology has been renamed as "theanthropology", it is important to see what 'man' means according to the 'Word of God'. From this basic and fundamental concept all our further reflections about 'man' should originate and develop.

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People in the Prophetic Perspective

The prophets viewed their people in the historical context of the Covenant that God had established with them through the events of the Exodus. They realised that Yahweh had taken them to himself as his people, a holy, priestly, prophetic, pastoral people, who were to be mediators between him and all other peoples (see Exod. 19:3f). Election, Covenant and Law did not apply exclusively to themselves. This followed from the logic of their faith in Yahweh as the Creator and Saviour of all peoples. So far as Israel is one among all peoples, and God's plan of salvation embraces all, the prophetic interpretation of Israel's life and fortunes has universal validity. In this article we examine the main aspects of the prophetic view of the human community.

1. God's plan: community through commitment

The prophets became what they were — God's spokesmen — through God revealing himself to them and enlightening them. It is when they came into the radiant light of God that they saw the truth about themselves. They came to self-knowledge through God-knowledge. Isaiah realised his own sinfulness and his call to holiness when he had a vision-experience of the thrice-holy God (Is. 6:5; see Lk. 5:8). Their own experience taught the prophets that God does not wish to remain hidden. He addresses his word of love and liberation to all humans through the whole of creation. He wants to enter into a dialogue with them. It is he "who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and makes his thoughts known to us" (Amos 4:13). He speaks to us through all that he does in our world, so that there is no excuse for our not recognising him (Is. 65:1f; Rom. 1:19f).

The prophets were characterised by an overwhelming sense of God's supreme reality. It is this personal realisation of God that enabled them to commit themselves totally to God, and to depend continually on him as their Guide. Such was their closeness to God that they could be said to stand in God's council and to give heed to God's word (Jer. 23:18f). They were convinced that all persons are called to a thorough self-transformation through their response to the creative and dynamic word of God. It was bound to manifest itself in the practice of righteousness and justice, steadfast love and mercy and faithfulness in one's personal and social life. All wrongdoing had its source in the people's lack of knowledge of God (see Hos. 2:20f; 4:6).

The creation theology of the Book of Genesis grew out of the people's faith in the God of the Exodus. Humans are called to such constant active communion with God and such docility to his holy will as is calculated to transform them into the image of God's own love and goodness. In this case they could become God's agents for the transformation of their world. God's plan was to entrust the world to humans who are the crown of his creation, and to make them responsible for its well-being and progress. The powers of chaos must be held in check, and the world, ordered by God at creation, must develop according to his plan. Our world is also God's world. He is most deeply involved in its existence and its functioning. Our call is to cooperate with God. If we did this habitually we would become like God, we would love one another, and build up the human community. Our harmony with God and with one another would be reflected in all our relationships with the material world.

This creation theology is the background of a famous passage in Jeremiah: "I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking and all the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the air had fled.

"I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger" (4:23-26).

Jeremiah saw chaos returning to the cosmos that God had created and entrusted to humans. Man-made calamities were nothing but a reversal of God's own creative and redemptive work in our world. This shows how much God has chosen to depend on us for the proper running of our world, and how wrong we are when we are inclined to blame him for the miseries of our world. This prophetic view differs sharply from the cyclic conception of history that prevailed among the decadent Nature religions of the ancient Near East. According to them, the blessings of fertility and prosperity for human families, for cattle and crops depended solely on the proper performance of certain prescribed ceremonies and rites including sacred prostitution. The question of private and public morality did not receive adequate attention at all. An ever-present problem, faced by the prophets, was that of Israel's assimilation to the Canaanite religious beliefs and practices after the settlement in Palestine (see I Kgs. 17f.).

2. The right ordering of society (Justice) is only through personal self-commitment to God (Faith)

This conviction had its origin in the foundation experience of Israel as sketched in the Book of Exodus. As a young man with a heart (Acts 7:23), Moses was faced with the problem of his own people being reduced to slavery and oppression. His own well-meant efforts at coming to their help proved completely unavailing. He was obliged to flee and to become an exile. He was left with an unsolved problem. If we were powerless in the face of cruel injustice and the wanton destruction of human lives, what could be the meaning of human existence?

His communion with God in the solitude of the desert enabled him to solve this problem. He came to a new vision of what God is. He is the God who sees the cruel oppression of his people. He hears their cry against their

oppressors. He is with them in their suffering, and he is not helpless. His purpose is to deliver them from their bondage, to make them *his* people, and to settle them on their own land. What prevents people from experiencing the liberation that God wants to bring them? The answer is found in the words that Yahweh spoke to Moses: "Come, I will send you that you may bring forth my people out of Egypt" (Exod. 3:10). God does not act in our world all by himself. He has put us in charge of our world, and he does not want us to abdicate our responsibility. He will not take our place. The oppressed people must themselves fight for their liberation. So far as their cruel bondage has led to their spirit being broken, they need leaders who will energise, encourage and support them in their struggle (see Exod. 6:9). How could leaders be wise and strong enough to fulfil this crucial role? Moses is given the answer: "I will be with you...I have sent you...You shall succeed in your mission of liberation" (Exod. 3:12).

It is not yet clear to Moses how he could work with God to bring about the deliverance of his people. Hence he asks for the revelation of God's name. For the Hebrews a person's name is not simply a label; it is the outward expression of one's inner reality. The name that God gives to himself is YAHWEH which in the context means: HE-IS-AND--HE-IS-FOR-YOU. God is the One who was, is and will be, which means that he is absolutely reliable, and his promise is inviolable. He will see to it that his agents succeed in the mission on which he is sent. Through this revelation Moses comes to a new self-understanding and a new vision: his mission of liberation cannot fail.

It is this new found faith that sustains Moses in the entire course of his mission, which did not make much sense from an ordinary human point of view. How could he get the powerful Pharaoh to agree to the liberation of the Hebrew slaves whom he needed so much? He was bound to run into serious difficulties. The initial set-back he suffered was so bad that he found himself praying; "O Yahweh, why have you done evil to this people? Why

did you ever send me? Where is the promised deliverance?" (Exod. 5:22f). Still he did not give up. There was something entirely new in the situation. Previously, when, as a young self-confident person, he tried to help his people and suffered a set-back, no option was left to him except to flee. Not that he was a coward. The situation had proved intractable. This was an important part of Moses' preparation for his present mission. He had a salutary experience of his own limitations, his own helplessness in the face of hostile forces. His initial faith, which prompted his intervention in the life of his people, proved inadequate.

This is a capital point of the prophetic experience. An ordinary knowledge of God, based on one's inherited faith, does not enable one to cope with the hardest problems of life. Moses' initial reaction to Yahweh's call was: "Oh my Lord, I am slow of speech... Please send some other person" (Exod. 3:10f). Isaiah's instinctive reaction to Yahweh's self-manifestation was: "Woe is me! I am lost! I am a man of unclean lips surrounded by people of unclean lips" (Is. 6:5). Jeremiah was more conscious of his inadequacy than of his sinfulness: "Ah, Lord God, I do not know how to speak: I am only a child" (Jer. 1:6).

Initial, traditional, second-hand faith must become personalised and interiorised faith. Truths of faith that had been grasped and held by the *mind* (like the truth of the omnipresence of God) must now be *realised* by the *whole person*. *That Moses made this journey to maturity of faith was his qualification for leadership.* This applies to all the prophets. In fact this is a journey that every person is invited to make. Moses' mission did not consist primarily in his bringing the people deliverance from Egyptian slavery. The deeper dimension of his mission was to inculcate on the whole people the mature faith which he himself had been blessed with (see Deuteronomy).

This is the same as saying that his mission was to build community. This was Yahweh's own ultimate purpose in the Exodus events. He had borne the people on eagles' wings and brought them to himself. If they obeyed his

voice and became *his* people, they could fulfil the role of a royal priestly prophetic pastoral people, acting as mediators between Yahweh and all peoples (Exod. 19:3f). The demoralised group of Hebrew slaves could become the new community envisaged by Yahweh so far as they committed themselves to him, and became assimilated to his compassion for the afflicted and the powerless and the voiceless. This would mean their experiencing freedom from the bondage of self and sin and the freedom to extend their love and concern to everyone, especially the needy and the exploited. Thus they would be joining Yahweh in his own redemptive mission which embraces the whole world. This shows that Israel's newly-effected existence as Yahweh's people was to be paradigmatic for all peoples.

The outcome of the revelatory and redemptive events of the Exodus was that Israel chose Yahweh as their God and Lord, their Saviour and Guide (see Exod. 14:31; 24:3f). In this case they want to follow his guidance in the whole of their life, personal, social, cultural, economic, political and international. It is this guidance that is given to the people in the form of the Law, the ten commandments which were further elaborated through additional codes. So the Law was not something that God imposed on people. It was an integral element of the Covenant-economy. The Pharisaism of Jesus' time had its roots in a divorce between the Covenant and the Law. The Pharisees were preoccupied with the external observance of the Law, but they had forgotten the meaning of the Covenant with its demand of a total love of God and of neighbour. Apparent fidelity to a whole series of prescribed observances is made into an easy and manageable substitute for the highly demanding challenge of complete loyalty to God and all his people. This is a risk to which all religions are exposed. Ultimately it is a form of spiritual blindness, human rebelliousness wearing the mask of religious piety, whereas genuine love, demanded by the Covenant, involves the transformation of the human heart.

3. The formidable obstacle of human rebelliousness

Here was a group of people who had been drama-

tically challenged to grow into a community of love and responsibility. They had been favoured with a striking revelation of the God of compassion as *their* God who wished to constitute them into a new people conformed to him. They had been given a Law which was a Magna Carta of freedom, human dignity, fraternity and equality for all — a Law that was characterised by a very special concern for the weak, the widow, the orphan, the poor, the enslaved and the stranger. The Law contained a whole series of provisions which were meant to forestall the exploitation of the weak by the powerful (see Exod. 20-23; Lev. 19-25; Deut. 14-16; 24 etc.).

But, paradoxically, according to the prophets and historians of this people, in course of time, they experienced, not the blessings of the *lived* Covenant, but the curses of the *broken* Covenant (see Deut. 27-28; II Kgs. 17:13f; II Chron. 24:17f; 36:9f). God had acted wonderfully to bring order and harmony into the disorder and chaos of the oppression suffered by this people in Egypt. The subsequent rebelliousness of this people meant that they were bent on undoing God's new creation and falling back into the original chaos of oppression. Isaiah puts the following complaint in the mouth of God: "Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know me; my people do not understand me" (1:2f).

The people who had been called to be holy are now laden with iniquity. The offspring of Abraham, the friend of God, are found to be confirmed evildoers. Those who should be worshipping the Holy One who had chosen them, praising and thanking him, despise him in reality, and are utterly estranged from him. They have suffered terribly in this process of spiritual and moral disintegration, but they have not learned to repent and come back to their Saviour-God (see Is. 1:4f). What will happen to the vineyard, planted on a very fertile hill, if, after the owner had done for it all that he could, he found that it yielded only wild grapes? He will remove its hedge and

allow it to be devoured and trampled down by beasts. It will become a wasteland overgrown with weeds, briars and thorns. What will happen to a people for whom the Lord did all that he could, from whom he expected love and righteousness, if finally they were found to be indulging in violence and bloodshed? (Is. 5:1f).

It is above all the prophets who brought home the fact of sin to the conscience of their people. They saw sin as estrangement from God and rebellion against him which necessarily led to gross violations of the order of love and justice willed by him. Thus Jeremiah had an overwhelming sense of human sin and bondage. He wonders whether you could find a single person who seeks the truth and does justice even if you ran to and fro through all the streets of Jerusalem and searched all her squares. He speaks of the people's inability to renounce evil, and the desperate sickness of the human heart: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil (13:23). "The human heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt: who can understand it?" (17:9).

Consequently the people who believed themselves to be the Elect of God stood under a divine judgment that would lead to national disaster and exile. It is because they served foreign gods and forsook the God who had settled them on their land that they had to serve strangers in a foreign land (Jer. 5:19). Jeremiah speaks of the people as "a company of treacherous men". They bend their tongue like a bow, so that falsehood and not truth grows strong in the land. They proceed from evil to evil, and heap oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit, following their own stubborn will. One's brother proves to be a supplanter, and one's neighbour goes about as a slanderer. They commit iniquity, and are too weary to repent.

In the 8th century B. C. Amos evaluated the people of Israel in the light of their Covenant-ideals. The order of love, justice and harmony demanded by the Covenant no longer existed. Instead the upper classes had become

violent, oppressive and exploitative. Under the monarchy, the typically Israelite social, economic and political system with its built-in concern for equality and fairness and compassion had been subjected to intolerable distortions. Israel began as an agricultural society having a tribal constitution. Their members, grouped into families and clans, were free and equal citizens with full civil rights. At the time of the settlement, land had been allotted in just measure to each clan and family. It was to be passed on to succeeding generations through inheritance, and was never to be sold. Israelite law was characterised by a very special concern for the basic rights of all the citizens, especially those exposed to exploitation. Thus the laws about the observance of the sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee were designed for the protection of the weaker classes.

Even before the monarchy a process of differentiation and deprivation of the weak had been going on. There were a small number of rich and prosperous families, while the mass of the population consisted of poorer families: see I Sam. 25:2f. Already at the time of David's rise to power there were many who were in distress, in debt, and were consequently discontented (see I Sam. 22:2). They could be forced to hire out as day labourers, or as soldiers, and, through their incurring debts, they could be reduced to some form of slavery.

Israelite Law emphasised justice and righteousness as the fundamental values to be cultivated in the life of the community. Self-aggrandizing competitiveness and the ruthless pursuit of gain were completely against the Israelite ethos, which was based on the principle of the solidarity of the entire people and the need to make provision for the welfare and dignity of all. The enviable principle that obtained in early Israelite society with its clan system is summed up by Micah: "a man and his house, a man and his inheritance" (2:2). Micah also paints the ideal as every man sitting under his vine and under his fig tree, with none to make them afraid (4:4). In contemporary society systematic social violence had replaced the practice of solidarity.

Originally the monarchy was intended as a defence against the threat of foreign enemies. But gradually it became the biggest factor causing the evolution of society along most undesirable lines. The monarchy brought with it a variety of new projects which required unlimited resources — the expenses of the royal household, the creation of crown lands and their continuing expansion, the royal building projects, a strong army with war chariots and a host of mercenaries, a new upper class of civil servants who used their power and opportunities to enrich themselves at the expense of the rural population, the system of taxation open to so many abuses, and finally the elaborate worship of the Jerusalem temple patronised by the king. Often enough the king was no better than the worst oriental despots (see 1 Sam. 8:10f).

The changes brought about by the monarchy had benefited the leading upper classes. The price that had to be paid for their affluence was the destitution of the lower strata of the population. The upper classes had expensively built winter and summer houses with furnishings made out of cedar and ebony and ivory. They were "heroes at wine-drinking, and spent their time feasting and stretching themselves on their ivory beds. The secret of their opulence was that "the spoil of the poor was in their houses" (Is. 3:14; see Is. 5; Amos 5). The transition under the monarchy from the old barter economy to a money economy was another factor that created serious problems for the poor. But their difficulties were a source of profit and advantage to the landlords, the creditors, tax officials, and the local merchants. In the unscrupulous scramble for wealth and power on the part of the "privileged" few, the vast majority were reduced to the level of things to be used and disposed of. All this must remind us strongly of the conditions of our own society. Such arrogance and heartlessness amounted to apostasy from Yahweh, the God of Israel (Is. 1:4). Yahweh had revealed himself as the one who takes the side of the oppressed, and challenges and even destroys those whose height is like the height of the cedars, and who are strong as the

oaks, when they are bent on oppression (Amos 2:9). He is against all that is proud and lofty. He makes light of lofty hills and high towers and fortified walls and beautiful crafts. He will see to it that the pride and haughtiness of the strong and wealthy are brought low (Is. 2:12f).

The worldly-mindedness and luxurious life-style of the upper classes in Israel meant that they were deserting the ideals of their desert origin, and becoming assimilated to the decadent religion and ethos of the Canaanite peoples around them (see Hos. 2:5f). Such was the spiritual blindness of the privileged classes that they complacently thought of Yahweh as the defender and guarantor of the social political religious system which they were "promoting". All they needed to do was to be faithful to all the observances of the traditional worship of Yahweh at the national sanctuary and at the various pilgrimage centres. The prophets always took care to expose the falsehood and hypocrisy of this religiosity (see Is. 1:10f; Jer. 7:1f; Amos 5:21f).

In the prophetic view *the* problem of the human community is *heartlessness*. The powerful refuse to recognise the lowly as their own, disown them, harden themselves against them, and proceed to misappropriate their necessary possessions by coercive methods. This means defying the God of the Covenant. All injustice is rooted in the denial of faith, though, at least in ancient society, the oppressors regularly posed as pious worshippers. It was clear to the prophets that those who pushed people aside in a senseless quest for things were defying God who is the Father of all, and who alone is the Source of life. Every member of the community is necessarily called to public responsibility in social, economic, political and legal matters. Ultimately it is the unchecked practice of injustice, cruelty and violence which constitutes the sickness of society, and which must lead to disaster.

The prophets were determined that the violence practised by the powerful, constituting a defiance of God's Law, must not remain unchallenged. The powerful did not want their plans to be disturbed. They liked to claim that

their affairs were outside the purview of *religious* leaders. Faith rested on God's promises of salvation which were independent of social upheavals. Religious practice must be confined to the sacred realm where God is worshipped with sacred rites. The prophets could not be deceived by such pretensions. They fearlessly unmasked the godlessness of such an attitude. A religion which could be a cover for exploitation, which could remain silent in the face of oppression of the poor was no religion at all.

4. The indomitable hope of redemption

Because the prophets were persons of a rock-like faith, they had a hope that no adversity, however shattering, could destroy. The last chapter of Micah is a typical expression of such a hope. The people found themselves in a situation which did seem quite hopeless. It looked as if good and upright people had perished from the earth, and none were left. What could be expected of a society where people lay in wait for others' blood, where they hunted one another with a net? They were doing evil diligently! The prince and the judge asked for a bribe. Even the great ones were weaving evil together. The best of them were like briars and thorn hedges. No neighbour could be trusted; no friend was worthy of confidence. Wives and husbands were equally unfaithful, and children treated their parents with contempt. The members of one's own house proved to be enemies. Indeed a dark picture. Could any situation be worse? But the prophet can go on to say quietly: "But as for me, I will look to Yahweh; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will give heed to me" (Mic. 7:7).

The prophet is not thinking of waiting passively; he is convinced that a constructive and dynamic response is possible. The present experience of disaster cannot be God's last word. It cannot mark the end of his dealings with his people: "When I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, Yahweh will be a light to me". God is the God of forgiveness who delights in steadfast love and compassion and continuing fidelity to the unfaithful: "You will

cast all our sins into the depth of the sea''. In every situation God is inviting a lively interaction between himself and his people. Even in chastisement his purpose is to correct and to save. The future is full of promise because the Lord himself is continuing to act, and calling for the people's cooperation. Even when the earthly city lies in ruins, the Lord is king over it. He continues to work among his forlorn people. A new beginning is possible through people listening to him. His creative and new-creative work consists in bringing order out of disorder, light out of darkness. So there is no reason why a dark stretch of the road should inspire terror.

The Lord wants to carry on his work of renewal through the remnant that has survived the disaster. Fearlessness, confidence, strength and joy are his gifts to those who turn to him and put their trust in him. He shames the strong through the weak. Already now the faithful can enter on their journey to the ultimate goal of salvation and peace. They can take an unconditional stand for the order of love and justice that God wants to establish here below. They can prepare for the time when the nations, disillusioned with their own schemes, will go up to the mountain of Yahweh to learn his ways and to walk in his paths. Instead of relying on the politics of superior armed might and confronting one another in mutual suspicion and hostility, nations will finally decide to beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Instead of learning war, they will plan for peace and all the benefits of peace (Mic. 4:1f).

Finally the prophets repose their hope in the Child who is given to us, the Shoot from the stump of Jesse, the one on whom the Spirit of Yahweh rests and remains, the Wonder-Counsellor, the Prince of Peace, the new man who rises not from the holy city of Jerusalem but from the little town of Bethlehem, the Shepherd who will stand and feed his flock in the strength and majesty of Yahweh his God, the one who will be great to the ends of the earth. He has made himself responsible for us. He is afflicted in all our afflictions. He has borne our griefs, and

carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions. Upon him was the chastisement that made us whole. With his stripes we are healed. He made himself an offering for sin and poured out his soul to death, so that we might be made righteous. In his presence the despairing can recover from their despair, and the terrified can recover from their terror, and hardened sinners can renounce the path of sin. He is our best Friend who suffuses our whole existence with his pardoning grace and unconditional love. God is not waiting to receive offerings from us; he is the one who offers us all the help we shall ever need. We do not need to conciliate him; he is the one who reconciles us with the Father and with one another, and restores us to his life and love (Is. 9; 11; 53; Mic. 5 etc).

God's steadfast love consists in his absolute commitment to his loving relationship with all humanity. What is necessary is that we walk humbly with the God who carefully prepares all our paths before us. Communion with him alone can transform us into godly persons capable of practising steadfast love and justice in our personal and social life. Only a personal knowledge of him can enable us to share his universal compassion and to experience the freedom from evil and the freedom for love that he brings. Only closeness to him makes it possible for us to know his will in the changing situations of our daily life and problems. Only union with him can equip us with the wisdom, counsel and strength we need in order to fulfil our responsibility to the human community. This interweaving of the twin struggles for faith and justice must sound as a hard saying for many a social worker in our time.

Conclusion

The prophets teach us that the demand of God is that we must identify with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned and the enslaved (see Mt 25). God is the God of justice, and his main purpose is to correct every injustice and to supply every lack of love and concern. It is a heartfelt concern

for the oppressed that motivated all the prophets. They continually exhort us to come to the aid of those who have been unjustly deprived of their right to a dignified human existence, who cannot yet make their voice heard in the councils of their own people.

In our world of injustice the prophets had to face no end of opposition because they raised their voice tirelessly on behalf of justice for the oppressed. Civil and ecclesiastical leaders were their chief opponents. The prophets were persecuted because they charged these leaders with neglecting their responsibility for the poor and the needy. The prophets exposed the criminal ways in which the privileged classes exploited the common people, and they reminded the people that no one could be indifferent to the violence and oppression practised in their midst. "Is it not your responsibility to see that justice is observed?" Micah put this question to those who hugged their ill-gotten gains and privileges, and were not concerned about the consequences of their selfish ways (3:1).

The true prophets were characterised by their burning sympathy for all sufferers, and their courageous readiness to get involved in the cause for justice. This is how they differed from the false prophets whose aim was to please their hearers and to receive some benefit from them. The true prophets whole-heartedly shared the suffering of their people to the point of accepting willingly the tragic fate that awaited them. Thus Jeremiah actively participated in the political events of his time and confronted the kings and politicians about their policies and attitudes and decisions. He accepted persecution and suffering as the price he had to pay for fidelity to his calling. The prophets were not content to make lofty pronouncements about correct norms; they embodied justice in their own persons and lives. They rose equal to all the hard demands of public service. In this they were the precursors of Jesus who established justice in our world by suffering gross injustice in the place of all sinners.

This is the most precious lesson that the prophets are meant to teach us. They challenge us to grow up into full responsibility for the total well-being of the community. They did not compartmentalise public life into separate spheres some of which were immune to participation by religious leaders. They urge us to engage uninhibitedly in the common struggle for justice, and to take the side of those who suffer injustice. They also make it clear that we may not look for guidance in this area from institutional channels. The God-given task of the prophets was to defend the interests of the community against the conflicting interests of all individuals and institutions. Today God teaches us through them so that, like them, we can also be wise and strong to pay the price of commitment to the goal of the total renewal of the human community.

Vidyajyoti,
Delhi - 54

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From Dust to Glory- the Anthropology of the Psalms

Introduction

Even though the title of this essay sounds a bit anachronistic, it is far from meaningless to inquire into what the Psalmists of ancient Israel thought of this puzzling being called 'man'. For, the quest for self-understanding is as old as humanity itself. What is our relationship with the earth to which we return at death, what is our relationship with the animal kingdom and what percentage of transcendence do we possess, are questions which arise in men's minds no sooner we are capable of thought and reflection. And in fact, we do find the very question, "What is man?" both in the book of Psalms, in the book of Job and in Sirach¹.

Secondly, one has to keep in mind that the Psalmists as well as all Semites of old and ancient man in general did not have what we call a secular idea of man nor did they have what Scholasticism called "natura pura" or pure nature. In other words, all anthropology was for them a theological anthropology. A conception of man without some relation to God or the divine would sound both absurd and meaningless to the Psalmists. Thus the question, "What is man?" is never an absolute question but it is always brought under a relationship to God, i.e., "What is man that thou art mindful of him?"², or "What is man that thou dost regard him?"³. The author of the book of Job gives it a slightly different context of God's testing

1. Cf. Ps 8:4; 144:3; Jb 7:16; Sir 18:8.

2. The verb *zakar* means to be mindful or keep in mind rather than remember.

3. The verb that appears in Ps 144:3 is *yada'* usually given as 'to know'.

man, "What is man that thou dost make so much of him?"⁴. The Psalmists are almost incapable of conceiving that man's yearning for God or a hankering after a relationship with Him is something superimposed on man, rather they would imagine that this is something inherent in man but is absent in the animal or the inanimate kingdom. Their view of man far from being atomistic or positivistic is what we have begun to call holistic.

The third point we should keep in mind is the one we have hinted at in the last paragraph. In contrast to Greek or Indian philosophy, ancient Semitic thought knows of no dualism in the understanding of man's nature. Dualism seems to have begun to infiltrate Hebrew thought when it first came in contact with Persian thought and the Mazdaean religion during the time of the Babylonian captivity. Thus the categories of spirit and matter are absolutely foreign to the Psalmists. The word *ruah* 'spirit' is as material as the word *nepesh*, 'throat' is spiritual! Thus *ruah* can mean both wind, breath as well spirit. So too, the word *nepesh* can mean anything such as soul, life, self, person as well as throat, neck, gullet, esophagus, besides applying to something in between like appetite or desire!⁵ The psychology and the sociology of a language should not be interpreted by those of another. It is not a question of finding an equivalent from Hebrew to Greek or vice-versa, but of establishing which concept from one language comes closest to that of another. Here it will be our task to identify the peculiar anthropology of the Psalmists who were Hebrews or Semites.

Finally, it should be kept in mind that no correct ideas on the anthropology of the Psalmists can be spelled out by limiting oneself one-sidedly to the psalms of lament. Further it should be noted that the psalms of lament can never be identified with scientific or philosophical

4. Jb 7:16 in Hebrew has the Piel of the root *gadal* and so would mean to make great or to consider as great, factitive or declarative Piel.

5. See Jenni Westermann, *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, (2 vols.), Munich Zurich, 1971c under *ruah* *napesh*.

treatises. On the contrary they are very much constrained and limited to their situations of suffering, grief and tragedy and in general tend to use hyperboles and highly exaggerated language. Thus the 'I am a worm and no man' of the laments should be juxtaposed with the 'I am a little less than God' of the hymns!⁶ Only thus could we make some claims to objectivity in our representation of the Psalmists' views on any topic.

I. Arisen in weakness

The human being, a creature clay

One does not have to be a philosopher to realise that man is a weak creature or a creature of dust. It is enough to observe what happens at cremation or to open a grave where a dead body had been buried for some years. The weakness and the limitedness of humans can also be deduced from the long years during which human children remain almost totally dependent on their elders and from the manifold needs of humans which if not catered to, humans would revert to dust. And if any one is down to earth it is Hebrew man! It is enough merely to examine the very concepts for 'man' which the Hebrew language has. We begin by quoting one of the most well-known psalms.

mâ' enosh kî tizk^erennû

ûben 'adam kî tipq^edennû

What is *man* that thou art mindful of him

And the *son of man* that thou dost care for him?(Ps 8:4).

In this verse we have two words for man in Hebrew, both of which are given in italics in English, i. e., '*enosh* (man) and *ben'adam* (son of man). In fact the most common word in Hebrew for 'man' is '*adam*, too well-known for us to dwell at length on it. We have the complete myth on the formation of man by Yahweh God in the Yahwistic account of creation where man's origin from the earth ('*adamâ*') is depicted. There man's solidarity with the

6. Cf. Ps 22:6 for the lament, and Ps 8:5 for the hymn.

earth from where he was taken is stressed. Man is an intrinsic part of inanimate creation. After the Fall, man will be told that he will return to the ground ('adamá) (Gn. 3:19). There too another synonym for 'adamá will be given and that is 'dust' or 'apar. The word which is translated as dust can also be translated as 'clay' as can be seen from the Book of Leviticus ⁷. The book of Job is even more specific when he says, contrasting the situation of weakness: sinfulness and the fleeting condition of man with that of angels;

What then of those who live in houses of clay
(*shoknê batê homer*) who are founded on dust?
(*be'apar yesôdam*) (Jb 4:19)

This comes out even more clearly in the following verse,

They are crushed as easily as a moth,
One day is enough to grind them to powder (Jb 4:20).

Man's origin from clay and his return to dust ('apar) is again referred to elsewhere in the book of Job,

You modelled me, remember as clay is modelled
(*kahomer 'asítanî*)
And would you reduce me now to dust? ('el 'apar
tesíbenî) (Jb 10:9).

In the same chapter God is contrasted to man, when the poet says, "Is your life mortal like man's, do your years pass as men's do?" (Jb 10:5) This is also what another Psalmist says but in an altogether different mood of hope and joy. "Man's life, a mere puff of wind, his days as fugitive as shadows" ('adam lahebel damá, yamaw kešel 'ôber). This could be translated literally as "Man is like a breath, his days like a passing shadow" (Ps 144:4). All the same, insists the Psalmist, Yahweh takes notice of man and thinks of him. The words are very similar to those of Ps 8:

yhwh mâ 'adam watteda'ehû
ben 'enosh wattedhashshebehû

7. Lv 14:41-57 but specially vv. 41f., where 'apar is translated as 'plaster' by both RSV and JB.

Yahweh, what is man that you are aware of him!
The son of man that you think of him! (Ps 144:3)

In yet another psalm of confession or lament, the psalmist is fully confident that God has all the more consideration for man because He is aware of man's nature as we would put it.

As tenderly as a father treats his children
So Yahweh treats those who fear him.
He knows what we are made of (*kî hû 'yada' yişrenû*)
He keeps in mind that we are dust (*'apar*) (Ps 103:14)

Once again the striking similarities to the Yahwistic account of creation are unmistakable! Whereas in Genesis we find the verb *yaşar*, to fashion, here we have the nominal form, *yeşer*, stuff or plasma, rendered by the RSV as "frame". And in both places we find the word dust, *'apar*. The fleeting nature of man's life on earth is very heavily stressed in this psalm.

Man lasts on longer than grass (*haşîr*)
No longer than a wild flower (*şîş haşşadê*) he lives
One gust of wind, and he is gone,
Never to be seen there again! (Ps 103:15f.)

In quite a different context Deutero Isaiah says the same with reference not to any ordinary mortal but to the Babylonian overlord and contrasts him with Yahweh. Identical words are used for mortal man, that is grass (*hasîr*) and wild flower (*şîş haşşadê*).

All flesh is grass
And its beauty like the wild flower's
The grass withers, the flower fades
When the breath of Yahweh blows on them (Is 40:6).

We come now to the other Hebrew word for man, that is *'enosh*. If *'adam* which is philologically related to *'adamâ*, the red clay or cultivable soil and refers more to the human body, *'enosh* seems to refer more to the quality of human life. As Claus Westermann remarks, *'enosh* never appears with the definite article and is even more collective in meaning than *'adam*. Further, he says that in

the books of Job and Psalms it always refers to human beings in the sense of mortals and limited beings in contrast to God⁸. Besides this, it is useful and important to keep in mind that one of the meanings of the root '*anash*' is 'to be weak/sick'.

Another synonym which the Psalmists use for man is *bašar* which is usually translated as 'flesh'. In fact *bašar* can mean flesh in the sense of *meat* as well as *animal*, human beings collectively as well as all living beings. More specifically *bašar* is contrasted to '*elohim*, God, just as we had seen in the previous section in relation to '*enosh*. Thus Ps 56:4b says,

be' lohîm batahtî lo' 'ira'

mâ ya'ašch bašar lî

In God I trust, I shall not fear

What man (flesh) will do to me !

From the context it becomes clear that *bašar* once again as in the case of '*enosh* stands for human beings with a special reference to their frailty. This is very clear from a text of the prophet Isaiah, where he says, "The Egyptians are men and not God ! Their horses are flesh and not spirit !"

umišrayim 'adam welo' 'el

wesûsêhem basar welo' rūah (Is 31:3)

In this interesting text the contrast between man ('*adam*) and God ('*el*) on the one side and between flesh (*basar*) and spirit (*rûah*) is very forcefully brought out.

In one so-called historical psalm where the psalmist makes a national confession as he recalls the sins of the past generations, he also shows why God did not utterly destroy the Israelites. One reason he gives is that Yahweh is "compassionate" (*raḥîm*) but besides that he tells us that God knows that human beings are "flesh" (*bašar*), i.e., weak and frail.

He remembered (kept in mind, *zakar*) that they were but flesh (*bašar*)

A wind that passes (*rûah holek*) and does not come back ! (Ps 78:39).

8. See Jenni Westermann under '*adam*' (cf. footnote 5).

Brevity and transitoriness of human life

There is a psalm very sapiential in character composed in the form of prayer of petition as well as of musing and meditation on the futility and transitoriness of life. It runs:

Yahweh, let me know my end (*qes*)
 And what is the measure of my days (*middat yamay*)
 Let me know how fleeting (*hedel*) my life is!
 Behold, thou hast made my days a few hand-
 breadths (*tepahôt*)
 And my life (*heled*) is as nothing (*ke'ayin*) in thy
 sight (Ps 39:4f).

The Psalmist realizes that however long one may live, life is going to have an end like a field that ripens unto the harvest. The Hebrew word *qes* or end is from the root *qasas*, to cut off. Secondly he asks what is the measure of our life to which the answer is clear, only a few spans. In short human duration on earth is transitory. There seems to be a play of words in Hebrew since the word for duration is *heled* and the one for transitory is *hedel*! A few verses later he stresses this idea once more. He says quite explicitly, "For I am thy passing guest (*ger*), a sojourner (*tôshab*) like all my fathers" (Ps 39:12)⁹. As the JB translates, "I am your guest, and only for a time, a nomad like all my ancestors." And the sum total of the Psalmist's thinking is given as a chorus twice, "Every man is a mere breath" (Ps 39:5c and 11c). In the last part of verse 5 and in the first of verse 6, the comparison is highlighted by a contrast:

Surely every man that stands (on earth) is a breath! (*hebel*)
 And every man that walks (on earth) is a shadow!
 (*selem*) (Ps 39:5f.)

The Hebrew word which has been translated as *shadow* really means *image* in the sense of unreal!

9. The pair *ger* and *tôshab* appears also in the Holiness Code in the plural *gerim* and *tôshabim* in Lv 25:23.

Whereas Yahweh is God from everlasting to everlasting (Ps 90:2) and a thousand years are like one day or even like a watch of the night (Ps 90:4), the years of human life are seventy or eighty years (Ps 90:10). Yahweh can easily turn men back to dust (Ps 90:3), He sweeps them away, they are like a dream (*shenâ*, literally 'sleep'), which is translated by JB as, "You brush men away like waking dreams" (Ps 90:5). The comparison of human life to grass (*hašîr*) which flourishes in the morning and withers in the evening" also appears here (Ps 90:6). Further, human life is compared to a sigh (*hegê*) in v.9 anticipating the idea that the sum total of man's years are '*amal wa'awen*, "toil and trouble" (Ps 90: 10). The idea is very similar to that of the Book of Job, which says, "Man born of woman, has a short life yet has his fill of sorrow. He blossoms and he withers like a flower, (*šîš*), fleeting as a shadow (*sel*), transient!" (Jb 14:1f). And again, "Has not man a hard service (*saba'*)¹⁰ upon earth?" (Jb 7:1a).

II. Enveloped in power

The human being, a handiwork of God

Even though man is a creature of clay, weak and fragile and even though his life on earth is brief, fragile and fleeting, man's dignity consists in the fact that God himself made him. As elsewhere in the Bible so also in the Psalms there is no demiurge or lower God who is responsible for making man. This is the paradox that man is! Time and again the Psalmists insist that man is made by God. Though the Psalmists do say that God "created" (*bara'*) the North and the South (Ps 89:11) and are aware that God can "create" a clean spirit within man (Ps 51:10) as well as "create" (*nibra'*) a people (Ps 102:18), the usual word used in the context is '*asah*. But one must not make too much of this and say that the later Priestly Author uses the verb *bara'* where the earlier Yahwist had '*asah*, for even the former does have the verb '*asah* (make) in some

10. The Hebrew word *saba'* found here is used in Modern Hebrew for army or military service.

contexts¹¹. Further, Deutero Isaiah uses all three verbs, 'ašah (make), yašar (form or fashion) and bara' (create) as parallels¹². Further, though the word bara' (create) does justice to God's transcendence and omnipotence, the verbs yašar (form) and 'ašah (make) stress much more God's nearness to and love for man. Thus one Psalm says that Yahweh is 'ošenû, our Maker (Ps 95:6). Another Psalm goes even further and tells us that it is not we who made ourselves but that it is God who made us, hû' 'ašahnû welo' 'anhanû (Ps 100:3). And yet another Psalm clearly says that man is God's handiwork, ma'ašê yadêka (Ps 138: 8) as much as the sun, moon and stars (Ps. 8:4). In particular Yahweh is considered as the inventor of the ear, nota' 'ozen literally the one who planted or set up the ear, and the creator of the eye, yošer 'ayin, literally the one who fashioned or formed the eye (Ps 94:9). Another word for 'create' is qanah which means really 'to acquire' or 'to get' in the sense of God as originating his creatures. It appears in the beautiful psalm which deals with the creation of human beings, the mysterious and wonderful beings brought into being by God's love and deep personal care. It says, "It was you who created (qanîta) my inmost self (kilyotay,) and didst weave me together (sakak) in my mother's womb. For all these mysteries, for the wonder of myself (nôra'ot nipletî) I praise you and for the wonder (nipla'im ma'ašîka) of your works" (Ps 139:13). We are reminded of Job's words, "Did you not pour me out like milk, and curdle me then like cheese? Clothe me with skin and flesh and weave (sakak) me of bone and sinew?" (Jb 10:10f.) With apologies to the author of the book of Job, one would like to think that man rather than the Behemoth is the masterpiece (reshit darkê'el) of God's works! (cf. Jb 40:15-19).

And as in the Yahwistic Author, so too in the Psalms the creation of man is connected with the rūah or spirit, even though there is no direct reference to the Genesis

11. Cf. Gn 1:7 God made ('asah) the firmament and even in the context of man's creation, na'aseh 'et 'adam, Let us make man! (Gn 1:26,-

12. Cf. Is 43:7 and 45:18

myth. According to the Psalms too man is a paradoxical combination of 'adamā or clay and rūah or spirit! As the Psalmist tells us, on the day man yields his breath or spirit (rūah), he returns to the earth ('adamā) from where he came! (Ps 146:4). And this spirit is God's gift to man, tells us another psalm. When God gives spirit or breath (rūah) fresh life begins, but should God stop them (rūah), they die and revert to the dust ('apar) from which they came! (Ps 104:29f). And as a penitential psalm puts it, "Do not deprive me of your holy spirit", instead of saying, "Do not let me die"! (cf. Ps 51:11).

The human being, a child of God

First of all a human being is an adopted child of God. As the classical lament of an abandoned man has it, "You (God) drew me out of the womb, you entrusted me to my mother's breasts, placed on your lap from my birth, ('aleka hoshlakti merahem), from my mother's womb you have been my God" (Ps 22:9f). There seems to be here an allusion to adoption in the fact that the one adopting a child receives the child as it comes out of its mother's womb on his or her lap or knees. At any rate from the context of the psalm it is clear that from the time of the Psalmist's birth God has taken him under his protection like a parent. The relationship of father and son is quite explicit in another psalm. "As tenderly as a father treats his children (kerahem 'ab 'al banim,) so Yahweh treats (riham yhw) those who reverence him" (Ps 103:13). A little earlier the Psalmist had said that Yahweh is "tender and compassionate" (Ps 103:8). The word used for "tender" is *rahim* which in turn is related to *rehem* or womb. The connotation is that just like a mother cannot help loving the child of her womb, so too Yahweh cannot help loving his own. It is interesting that though Hebrew society was patriarchal it would be more accurate to call God mother rather than father! And in fact according to another psalm, God's love for us outshines that of father or mother. "Even if father and mother desert me, Yahweh will care for me" (Ps 27:10). We are reminded of the classical quotation

from Deutero Isaiah, "Does a woman forget her baby at the breast, or fail to cherish the son of her womb? Yet, even if these forget, I will never forget you!" (Is 49: 15).

The human being, a servant of God

At times the idea that man is Yahweh's servant also comes to the fore, as when the Psalmist prays, "Give thy strength to thy servant (*'abadeka*) and save the son of thy handmaid (*ben 'amateka*) in Ps 86:16¹³. It is to be noted that the connotations of the Hebrew word *'ebed* are quite different from those of the English 'slave'. For *'ebed* can mean 'slave' or 'servant', as well as 'vassal' or 'devotee'. There seems to be a reference to a covenant relationship in Ps 86 for the Psalmist asks Yahweh for a sign of covenantal love and loyalty (*'ôt le'ôbâ*) which is not apparent from the English translations¹⁴. Both these ideas of *'ebed* as vassal and the covenantal relationship between man as vassal and Yahweh as overlord come to the fore in the Royal Psalm 89, where David is portrayed as Yahweh's loyal vassal. "I have found David, my 'servant' (*'abdî*), with my holy oil I have anointed him" (Ps 89:20). The idea of covenant is explicit in Ps 89: 3. The idea of 'servant' is not in opposition to 'son' for in Ps 89:26f., the filial relationship of David to Yahweh is also stressed. No wonder the New Testament refers to Jesus both as God's son as well as servant¹⁵.

Humankind as God's flock

In the ancient Near East the king was called the shepherd of his people. Thus shepherd was very often a synonym of king. In Israel in particular the king was never conceived of as an absolute monarch but always as Yahweh's viceroy¹⁶. The idea that this symbol of shepherd

13. Cf. also Ps 116:16

14. Cf. Ps 86:17. JB has "one proof of your goodness", and RSV "a sign of your favour". See Jenni/Westermann under *tob* and *hesed* (cf. footnote 5),

15. For Jesus as God's Son see Mk 1:11 and parallels. For Jesus as Servant see Act 3:13 and 4:27

16. Cf. Dt 17:17-20, where the king is not above but subject to the Torah. See also Nathan's oracle in 2 Sm 7 and Ps 2

conveyed is that of protector and provider. The most well-known text naturally is Ps 23. In this psalm Yahweh provides the psalmist with all the necessities of life and leisure (Ps 23:1f), offers him protection in situations of danger and death (Ps 23:4) and gives him guidance along the path of virtue (Ps 23:3). And if this is on the individual or personal level there are other psalms which call Yahweh the shepherd of the whole people. We are his flock and the sheep of his pasture (Ps 103:3). Yahweh guided his people like a flock through Moses and Aaron (Ps 77:20).

The human being as God's guarded possession

There is one whole psalm which treats of the idea that Yahweh is the "guardian of Israel" (*shomer yiśra'el*) and goes on to describe and explain what this entails, (Ps 121). The root *shamer* (to guard) appears six times in this psalm which contains only eight verses. The guardian of Israel is an omnipotent one as we would say, whereas the Psalmist says that he is the maker of heaven and earth, that is of the universe (Ps 121:2). He neither dozes (*lo' yanûm*) nor does he sleep (*lo' yishan*) altogether (Ps 121:4). He protects us from the power of the sun and the moon (Ps 121:5f), he guards our lives from all harm and calamity (*mikkol ra'*) everywhere and always (Ps 121:7f).

Another psalm stresses not only the idea that Yahweh guards us but that he guards us human beings as something very precious in his eyes, as we would our very eyes! (Ps 17:8). Not only the power of God but his love is stressed. Thus the Psalmist feels very confident when Yahweh is on his right (Ps 16:8) or on his side (Ps 56:10).

A very common and a favourite image in the Psalms is that Yahweh is like the mother hen taking her chicks under her wings. Thus one Psalmist takes shelter in the shadow of his wings, *beṣel kenapêka 'eḥseh* (Ps 57:1), whereas another sings for joy (*ranan*) in the shadow of Yahweh's wings! (Ps 63:7). This comparison may be very ancient and it is already to be found in connection with the Exodus and wandering. Thus according to one Pen-

tateuchal tradition Yahweh tells Israel that he had carried them on eagle's wings, *wa' ešša' 'etkem 'al kanpê nescharîm* (Ex 19:4). An almost identical comparison is also found in the so-called Song of Moses at the end of the Book of Deuteronomy, where we are told that Yahweh like a mother eagle "spreads out his wings (*kenapaw*) to hold him (Israel), he supports him on his pinions" (Dt 32:11).

An even more common image that reflects Yahweh's loving protection of man is taken from warfare. Many a psalmist has called Yahweh his shield (Ps 18:2), our shield (Ps 33:20)¹⁷.

That Yahweh is our light (Ps 27:1) or a lamp that guides us through the darkness (Ps 18:28) is also found in some psalms.

In conclusion to this section one could say that since Yahweh takes care and guards every bone of ours (Ps 34:21), the Psalmist can sleep in peace! (Ps 3:5), knowing for sure that his days are in Yahweh's hands (Ps 31:14).

Human needs provided for by God

When we compare the religious literatures of the Ancient Middle East with that of Israel what strikes us is the fact that the Israelite never pictures Yahweh as an impetuous or a capricious God even though there are references to Yahweh's anger and wrath. To the Israelites it is very clear that Yahweh is a just God who punishes sin and so one can anticipate his reactions! But beyond this, they positively conceive of God as one who is interested in humans and who looks after their needs and provides for them. It is this that enables the Israelite to go through life with a certain sense of poise and equanimity. And since they believe only in the power of Yahweh there is no room for other gods or demons who threaten the security and the peace of man on earth. Thus we are told that Yahweh himself formed and fashioned the earth (*yašar*) just as he had formed man (cf. Ps 95:5). It is Yahweh too

¹⁷. Cf. also Ps 3:3; 7:10; 28:7 etc.

who made the Sea (*yam*) considered as a Monster of Chaos in the Babylonian myths (Ps 95:5). Even more, Yahweh made the world firm (Ps 93:1) and set limits on the Sea lest it cause a flood on the earth again (Ps 104:9) an idea forcefully brought out in the Book of Job¹⁸. Yahweh controls the pride of the Sea (*yam*) when its waves ride high (Ps 89:9f) and he even gives man the same power (Ps 89:25), something unimaginable for the Babylonian. The sun, the moon and stars too are not gods who hold sway over humans but God's own handiwork *ma'ašē 'eḥbe'otēka* are told in another psalm (Ps 8:4). Thus the Psalmist tells us that man need not fear "the terror of the night (*paḥad laylā*) nor the arrow that flies by day (*heṣ ya'ūp yōmam*), nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness (*deber ba'opel*), nor the destruction that wastes at noonday" (Ps 91:5f). Further God has given his angels the charge to look after man (Ps 91:11) and protect him against inanimate nature, beasts and man (Ps 91:12; 13:3).

And if this be negative or preventive providence, other psalms speak of God's direct and positive looking after man's needs. Thus Yahweh is the giver of rain and the consequent prosperity to man with regard to grain and oil and wine as well as grass for man's cattle and sheep (Ps 65:9-13). Again God provides "food from the earth, wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart" (Ps 104:15). And in case of any calamity like drought or the like, we are told that Yahweh keeps us alive in famine (Ps 33:19). With such a loving and provident God how could the Israelite feel threatened and insecure?

III. Destined to Glory

Humankind's role in the universe

As Psalm 8 tells us, the glory and the power of the heavenly bodies seem to be far higher than that of man who seems insignificant in comparison with them. And yet

18. Cf. Jb 28:8-11. See also Ps 65:7 where Yahweh stills the roaring of the waves of the sea.

it is man and not the Sun or the Moon who are the master and the care-taker of the universe. Truly man is a paradox, for though he is weak and originates in dust or clay, man takes precedence over the rest of creation; for man is little less than divine (*me'at me'elohim*) as the same psalm tells us (Ps 8:5). Yahweh our Lord has crowned man with glory and honour (*kabôd wehadar*), attributes that are normally associated with kings as one of the Royal Psalms states. "His glory (*kabôd*) is great through thy help, splendour and majesty (*hod wehadar*) thou dost bestow on him" (Ps 21:5). Though man's dignity seems to be royal in character, man is not the king of the universe but Yahweh. For it is God who has given man this dignity and has given him a role as well, a role which is similar to that of a viceroy as the Royal or Messianic Psalms teach us when speaking of the king of Israel¹⁹. But even in this present psalm this comes out very clearly. "Thou hast given him (man) dominion (*tamshîlehû*) over the work of thy hands (*bema'asê yadêka*), thou hast put all things under his feet" (*kol shattâ taḥat raglaw*) whether sheep, oxen, wild beasts, birds or fishes (Ps 8:6-8). The royal dignity is apparent from the root of the Hebrew verb *mashal* (to rule) from where we get the noun *moshel*, king or ruler²⁰. Another word for ruling or holding sway over a people is *radah*, literally to tread under foot, hence *rodeh* is governor. This root appears in the Royal Psalm where a wish or prayer is made for the king that he may have dominion (*radah*) from sea to sea (Ps 72:8). The idea of treading on his enemies by the king appears from the Messianic psalm where the king's enemies are called his *hadom raglêka* or footstool (Ps 110:1). In order not to confuse matters it must be very explicitly stated that Psalm 8 is not a Royal or Messianic Psalm and was never interpreted as such in Israel or the Jewish Synagogue. This psalm treats of human beings in general and not of any king in particular. It is only the New Testament that

19. Cf. Ps 2:2-6; 18:50; 72; 89

20. Cf. Mi 5:2 and Is 3:12

combines this psalm with Ps 110 which is explicitly royal messianic in character, and treats it as messianic while applying both psalms to Jesus Christ²¹. Psalm 8 is anthropological and not theological in character, we could say.

Conclusion

One of the greatest prophets of Israel speaking in the name of his God, has said, "Cursed is the man (*geber*) who trusts in man ('*adam*)" and again, "Blessed" is the man (*geber*) who trusts in Yahweh (Jr 17:5-7). This seems to summarise very succinctly the anthropology of the Psalms. On the one hand, as the very words for 'man' in the Hebrew language suggest, man is mud ('*adamā*'), dust ('*apar*') and weak 'flesh' (*baśar*). He cannot find strength and confidence in things of flesh (*baśar*) as Jeremiah puts it. However, the one who created man is the omnipotent God himself, the creator of heaven and earth who sustains this world and takes care of it in his admirable providence. It is this powerful, loving and caring God that gives security and strength to insecure and weak man.

But beyond this, man is also not totally identifiable with weakness for he also partakes of the reality called *ruah* or spirit, that has been infused into him if we could put it, by God himself. On the one hand he is flesh (*baśar*) on the other he is also spirit (*ruah*), though on the one hand he is dust ('*apar*') and mud ('*adamā*') that is man ('*adam*') on the other he is only a little less than God (*me'a! me'elohim*). Though on the one hand he is transient, on the other he is also in a way transcendent. And this is the dignity of man, to be a creature at the crossroads, and only he could be God's fitting viceroy on earth over mud and matter, over beast and bird as he makes his pilgrimage from the dusty depths of his origins to the soaring heights of his goal, from dust to glory, from '*apar* to *hadar*'!

21. See the example I Cor 15:25-28

The Various Facets of Man in Wisdom Literature

Although the books of Sirach and Wisdom betray some familiarity with the Greek concept of man, the anthropology of the sapiential literature as a whole is typically Semitic and does not differ much from that of the rest of the OT. While the Western mind analyzes, the Hebrew mind synthesizes and looks at man as a whole, as part of the human community and as related to the Creator and the other creatures.

'Biblical man is a unity of flesh, soul and spirit, not a trichotomy or dichotomy of body and soul. The Hebrew saw man whole, a healthy viewpoint for balanced, integral living, and radically related both to God, mankind and all creation'¹.

There is no Hebrew word for body and some part of it, v.g. the throat, the flesh or the heart, are not so much considered as separate organs but as centres of particular activities which reveal the whole man under a certain function or facet. The heart v.g. is the seat of reasoning and the expression of the thinking man.

Hans Walter Wolff, in his 'Anthropology of the Old Testament', has well-chosen headings which we can take over in our survey: 1-*nepesh*, the needy man, 2-*basar*, man in his infirmity, 3-*ruah*, man empowered and 4-*leb* (*lebab*), reasonable man².

1. Don Wulstan Mork OSB: *The Biblical Meaning of Man*, Bruce, Milwaukee, 1967, P. X. Cf. also: G. C. Berkhouwer, *Man the Image of God*, Eerdmans Publ. Co 1967, pp. 195f.

2. Hans Walter Wolff: *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, SCM Press London 1974 (Transl. by Margareth Kohl)

1. Nepesh: Man in need

1.0: Etymologically, *nepesh* means throat, both the wind-pipe and the gullet. For the Semitic people eating, drinking and breathing all took place in the throat; so it was the seat of the elemental vital needs in general³.

1.1: In some texts, *nepesh* obviously refers to the neck; 'The waters reached up to my neck' (Jonas 2:5 and Ps 69:1). There is often a connotation of danger from flood waters, or a snare, a sword: 'A fool's mouth is his ruin and a snare around his neck' (Prov 18:7b). 'Don't befriend a man given to anger ...lest you lay a snare for your neck' (Prov 22:34f). 'Our neck escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowler' (Ps 124:7). 'The sword strikes at their neck' (Jer. 4:10)⁴.

1.2: As gullet, *nepesh* is the seat of hunger and thirst and stands for appetite or need of food and drink. A thief when hungry, 'steals to satisfy his appetite' (Prov 6:30). 'From the fruit of his words a man has good things to eat, but the appetite of the treacherous feeds on violence' (13:2). In a respectable company, 'if you have a ravenous appetite (= are a ba'l *nepesh*), put a knife on your craving;' (Prov 22:2). 'All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied. (Qoh 6:7). This longing is at times connected with a sense of taste. 'Pleasant words are like a honey comb, sweetness to the throat, healing to the body' (Prov 16:24). Fulfilled appetite tramples on honey, but for a hungry throat every thing is sweet' (Prov 27:7). The 'throat' can also feel repugnance for food or evil or life itself. 'His (Job's) throat loathed delicious food' (Jb 33:20). 'Six things the Lord hates and seven are abomination to his *nepesh*' (Prov 6:16). 'My *nepesh* has a distaste for life' (Jb 10:1).

1.3: This craving is not always restricted to food and drink but can extend to other longings and desires. 'The

3. Ibid. P. 14

4. Taking the Semitic background into consideration, Simeon's prediction in Lk 2:35 might be translated as 'A sword shall strike at your neck' rather than pierce the 'soul'!

lazy man's longing craves in vain, but the desire (nepesh) of the diligent grows fat (=is richly rewarded)' (Prov 13:4), 'Giving in to lust is sweet to the man of desire, but the fool finds it hard to desist from evil' (Prov 13:19). 'The craving of the wicked desires evil' (Prov 21:10). Unsatisfied desire can also lead to good and be an urge to action. 'A workman's longing urges him on to work, his hungry mouth drives him on' (Prov 16:26). For full satisfaction of his need, man should turn to God. 'YHWH does not let the righteous nepesh go hungry, but repulses the craving of the wicked' (Prov 10:3).

1.4: As windpipe, nepesh is the seat of breathing, another vital need. This is probably the original meaning of the verb napash, to breathe, to blow or according to II Sam 16:14, to take a breath, to rest and relax (cfr. also Ex. 23:12; 31:17). In Job's description of the crocodile-like monster, nepesh is just a blast of hot air, 'his breath kindles coals!' (Jb 41:13-RSV 41:21). But in Jb 11:20 it is clearly the breath of life, 'The hope of the wicked shall be like the breathing out of the nepesh (i. e. vanish)'.

1.5: At times, nepesh is used as parallel to life (ḥayyim). 'He who finds me (wisdom) has found life (ḥayyim)... but he who offends me loses it (hurts his nepesh)' (Prov 8:35f). 'God keeps back his nepesh from the pit, and his life from going to the tomb' (Jb 33:18, 22). 'As a bird rushes into a snare without knowing his life (nepesh) is at stake'... (Prov 7:23). Dt 12:23 states that nepesh is in the blood and so it can be synonymous to *damim*. 'The unwise lie in wait for their own blood, set a trap for their own life' (Prov 1:18). In the dialogue between God and Satan, nepesh is obviously life: 'A man will give up all his possessions to stay alive (keep his nepesh)... Behold, he is in your hand, only spare his life!' (Jb 2:4, 6). Even in parallelism with flesh, the meaning can be life: 'I take my flesh between my teeth and put my breath into your hands!' (Jb 13:14). But the identification of nepesh with life should not be generalized. There are texts where nepesh is said to die! Before his final exploit at the hall of the Philistines, Samson exclaims: 'Let my nepesh die with the Philistines!' (Judg 16:30).

1.6: The connection with either gullet or windpipe as organs of the body can recede into the background so that nepesh expresses some psychological experience, inner feeling or emotion.

Job exclaims, 'How long will you torment my nepesh (= myself who am longing for you)? (Jb 19:2). When affected by inhuman conditions, he says, 'My nepesh grieves for the poor! (Jb 20:25). Nepesh can also be kindled by love (Cant 1:7; 3:1) or faint at the lover's departure, 'My nepesh failed at his flight!' (Cant 5:6). In Jb 6:11, the nepesh stands for self-control: 'Have I the strength to go on waiting! Is it within my power to prolong my nepesh (= remain patient)?'

1.7: Although the Greek Bible uses the word *psychē* (soul) to render nepesh, it should not be understood as a formal element which animates the body i.e. as the Aristotelian dichotomy. There is no question of soul separate from the body. Nepesh too goes to the 'pit': 'He has spared my self 'nepesh' from going to the pit, allowing my life (hayyathi) to continue in the light... rescuing his nepesh from the pit, to let the light of life shine on him.' (Jb 33:28, 30). There are more obvious instances where nepesh stands for the person or the self: 'I also could speak as you do, if you were in my place and I in yours (= if your nepesh was instead of mine)' (Jb 16:4). Elihu was angry with Job for 'justifying himself (his nepesh) rather than God' (Jb 32:2). Even in Prov 3:22, the parallelism with neck is not to be stressed: 'Keep sound wisdom and discretion, they will be life for yourself (nepesh) and adornment for your neck (gargaroth)!'. In the priestly document nepesh is synonymous to person: 'all the offspring of Lea (kal nepesh) number 33 persons' (Gn 46:15 etc.). It stands for man himself but in his aspiration, his needs which only God can fully satisfy: 'Why are you cast down, my nepesh, why are you disquietened within me? Hope in the Lord, I will praise him still, my Saviour and my God!' (Ps 42:5).

2. Basar: man in his infirmity

2.0: *Lasar* is the fleshy part of the body or the body itself. It refers as well to the flesh of animal and that of

humans: out of about 275 occurrences in the Old Testament more than 100 relate to animals. Job 10:11 mentions four elements of the human body: skin, flesh, bones and sinews. Did you not clothe me with skin and flesh, weave me with bones and sinews?' A fifth element is added in Ezechiel's vision of the resuscitation of the 'dry bones': *rûah*, the life-giving spirit (Ez 37:5f).

2.1: As flesh, *basar* is synonymous to *she'er*, although the latter may be the muscles attached to the bones while the former is closer to the skin with which it 'clothes' the body: 'When the end comes, when body (*basar*) and flesh (*she'er*) are consumed...' (Prov 5:11) Job states, 'The hair of my *basar* (flesh/skin) stands on end!' (Jb 4:15). As part of the body it is often associated with the bones: 'Touch his bones and his *basar*!' (Jb 2:5 and Gn 2:23). It can be living, healthy flesh: 'His *basar* recovers the vigour of his youth' (Jb 33:25). Or it refers to sick, decomposing flesh: 'My *basar* is clothed with worms' (Jb 7:5). 'Beneath my skin my flesh wastes away, the bones begin to show and my teeth fall out of their gums' (Jb 19:20)⁵. *Basar* can also mean meat, what has been killed and is prepared for food: 'Those who devour *basar*'... (Prov 23:20). The same interpretation could be given to Job 19:22, 'Why hound me down? Will you never be satiated with my flesh/meat?'

2.2: In a few instances *basar* is also used as euphemism for the sexual organ of either sex (cfr. Lev 15:2, 19; Ezech 16:26; 23:20).

2.3: Very often *basar* is simply the human body, for which the Hebrew has no specific word. 'I thought about cheering my body with wine' (Quo 2:3). 'Have I the strength of stone? Is my body made of bronze?' (Jb 6:12) 'Words of wisdom are health for the body' (Prov 4:22). 'In my body I shall see God!' (Jb 19:26). 'A conciliatory mind (= a healing heart) is life to the body, but jealousy is rottenness

5. The KJ's version 'to escape with the skin of one's teeth' makes no sense if taken literally: the skin of a tooth? But it has become an idiom for a narrow escape and no modern translator dare correct the wrong rendering.

to the bones' (Prov 14:30). Basar can also signify the person. The Psalmist uses it as parallel to the personal pronoun: 'My body trembles for fear of you, I am afraid of your judgements!' (Ps 119:120).

2.4: The body is also the root of biological relationship, family ties: 'Joseph is our own brother, our own flesh!' (Gn 37:27). But this community aspect is not so prominent in Wisdom literature, which deals more with problems of an individual nature rather than covenantal and communitarian themes. Even the expression 'kol basar', all flesh, does not so much link the person to the whole human race as emphasize the frailty of our nature, 'all flesh shall perish together and man shall return to dust!' (Jb 34:15).

2.5: In relation to God, basar denotes the limitation and weakness of man: Job asks God, 'Have you got eyes of flesh (=human eyes)? Do you see as man sees?' (Jb 10:4). 'In his hands is the nepesh of every living being, and the ruah (breath) of every human (=kol basar-ish), (Jb 12:10). 'If man, a mere creature of flesh, cherishes resentment, who will forgive him for his own sin?' (Sir 28:5).

Although basar is rendered by flesh or body it means the whole man. At death, the whole man returns to dust (Jb 34:15; Ps 104:29). For Claude Tresmontant, 'Flesh is our index of frailty. The flesh is man inasmuch as he is not God.'⁶ 'God remembers they are but creatures of flesh' (Ps 78:39).

3. Ruah: man empowered

3.0: The original meaning of *ruah* is, in general, 'moving air' in various degrees, from a gentle breeze to a violent stormwind. In nearly one third of the cases where it occurs in the Old Testament, it has kept this meaning. Otherwise it is used about 130 times to signify the spirit in man, animal or in false gods and some 136 times as the power of God. This is in sharp contrast with *nepesh* which is used only thrice in relation with God!

3.1: It was a 'great wind' from across the wilderness, a gale, which destroyed the house where Job's family had a party (Jb 1:19). Ruah can be vehement and difficult to

control: 'Whoever can restrain a contentious woman can restrain the wind!' (Prov 27:16). In Qoh. 1:6 it blows consecutively in different directions but it mostly symbolizes some fleeting hope, 'chasing after a puff of wind' (Qoh 1:14 and nine other occurrences). Job is exasperated by the empty words of his friends; 'Is there no end to 'windy' words!' (Jb 16:2). Eliphaz had spoken of 'windy' reasoning (Jb 15:2). In transferred meanings the aspect of power rather than that of futility will be retained.

3.2: Ruah does occur as breath and is at times synonymous to neshmah or nepesh: 'A breath (neshmah) from God, a blast (ruah) from his nostrils, will consume the wicked' (Jb 4:9). 'As long as my breath (neshmah) is in me and God's spirit in my nostrils...' (Jb 27:3). 'The nepesh of every life (hay) and the ruah of every mortal man is in God's hands.' (Jb 12:10). In this last sentence it seems that nepesh refers more to the organ (windpipe) while ruah more to the action of breathing. Death occurs when God withdraws his life-giving spirit. 'If he gathers his ruah and his neshmah to himself, man returns to the dust' (Jb 34:14). One gets the impression that the life principle — whether blood or breath — always remains connected with God, its source, and is never fully individualized. Like the electric current which activates a machine, it can be switched off, withdrawn, as if it never belonged fully to man (Gen 6:3).

3.3: God's ruah not only communicates life, but also a certain vital energy, or intellectual acumen. 'It is a spirit (ruah) in man, the breath (neshmah) of Shaddai that gives discernment' (Jb 32:8). It can be a kind of charismatic inspiration which is transient (Nu 11:26f; Joel 2:28) or a more permanent status, an anointing of YAWEH Adonai (Is 61:1).

3.4: As inner disposition, ruah (or ruhoth) is more personalized and can acquire the same meaning as leb (heart/mind). 'Man's ways are pure in his own eyes, but YHWH assesses the inner dispositions (ruhoth)' (Jb 16:2; Job 21:2 has leb in the same context). It can denote resentment, short temper or patience: 'Why turn your resentment against God?' (Jb 15:13)! 'Why should I not be short-tem-

pered?' (Jer. 21:4). 'A man of great patience (long 'appaim) has understanding, but a man of short ruah is more than foolish' (Prov 14:29). 'Better a patient disposition (=long ruah) than a proud spirit' (Qoh 7:8). 'A proud spirit leads to ruin' (Prov 16:18).

3.5: In a dynamic relationship with others, the spirit means will-power, self-mastery or inclination to evil. 'A man who cannot control his spirit is like a city with a breach in the wall' (Prov 25: 28). But 'he who controls his spirit can conquer a fortified city' (Prov 16:32). 'He who controls his speech has real knowledge, a man of discernment keeps his temper cool' (Prov 17:27). 'A loyal spirit can keep secrets' (Prov 11:13). 'A spirit of harlotry has led my people astray' (Hosea 4:12; 5:4). Ruah is not directly related to a physical organ and is therefore far less personified than nepesh.

4. Leb (lebab): the reasonable man

4.0: *Leb* occurs about 850 times in the Old Testament, 100 times more than nepesh. It is practically always referring to the human heart. The original meaning is the muscular organ that pumps the blood around the body and not so much a heart that palpitates with love: the Hebrews relate love to the soft bosom or rather the womb, in case of a woman. Leb is rather the centre of psychological and intellectual life. Thought which we would relate to the mind or the brains, is attributed to the heart.

4.1: There are very few instances where leb means just the physical heart without any mental connotation. 'Nabal's heart died within him and turned to stone; about ten days later he himself died' (1 Sam 25:37f). 'The heart of the sea-monster was made as hard as stone, as hard as the lower millstone' (Jb 41:24). The hardening or softening of the heart usually implies some obstinacy or dejection. 'Happy the man who is always on his guard (God fearing), he who hardens his heart will land into trouble!' (Prov 28:14). 'God made my heart soft (=disheartened me), Shaddai has filled me with fear' (Jb 23:16). The fatness of heart means dullness of mind: 'Make their hearts fat!' [Is 6:10].

4.2: The heart is the centre of understanding, wisdom and knowledge. 'You senseless people, acquire an understanding heart!' (Prov 8:5). The heart/mind of the intelligent gains knowledge (Prov 18:13) or seeks it (Prov 15:14). Ear and heart are often associated in the process of acquiring knowledge. 'Incline your ear to wisdom, apply your heart to understanding' (Prov 2:2) or 'Give ear to my word, apply your heart to my doctrine' (Prov 22:17). Wisdom has its seat in the heart: 'His heart is wise and his strength is great' (Jb 9:4). Leb is the store house of knowledge and memory: 'Write the words of wisdom on the tablet of your heart'. (Prov 7:3) It is from the heart that words are uttered. 'They speak words from the heart' (Jb 8:10). 'The heart/mind of the wise makes him eloquent' (Prov 16:23).

4.3: Like nepesh, the heart is the source of longing, desires and decisions. 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a wish fulfilled is a tree of life' (Prov 13:12) 'If my feet have wandered from the right path or my eyes have led my heart astray... If my heart has been seduced by woman... let my own wife grind corn that is not mine' (Jb 31:7-10). 'Let not your heart covet the beauty of another man's wife' (Prov 6:25). 'In his heart man plans his course, but the Lord directs his steps!' (Prov 16:9). The impulses of the heart can lead one astray, 'He who trusts in his own heart is a fool' (Prov 28:26). But the heart has also the power of discernment between good and evil: 'Keep watch over your heart, since here are the well-springs of life, (Prov 4:23).

4.4: The root of evil and immorality is also situated in the heart. The heart can be pure (Prov 22:11) or perverse, warped (Prov 11:20; 12:8). A man can have smooth lips with a wicked heart (Prov 26:23). His heart 'designs wicked plans' (Prov 6:18). Some are 'proud at heart' (Prov 16:5; 21:4) or have 'a heart hypocritical and full of rancour' (Jb 36:13).

4.5: Leb is the place of unknowable impulses, hidden from mortals but not from God. 'If you say "But look, we did

not know it!', He who weighs the hearts will surely perceive it!' (Prov 24:12). 'The hearts of men are open before YHWH' (Prov 15:11). Even 'the heart of the king is in the hand of YHWH!' (Prov 21:1).

4.6: Leb as the centre of sensibility and emotion is very similar to ruah. 'A healing heart (peaceful attitude of a mind ready for reconciliation) is life for the body, but jealousy is rottenness for the bones' (Prov 14:30). The heart can be 'stirred up', emotionally up-set (Prov 23:17), cheerful, glad (Prov 15:13; 15; 17:22) or sorrowful, sad (Prov 14:13; 25:20). Leb (ab), the heart, is not only the physical centre of the human body, the living source of the blood stream. According to the Bible it is the core of man's emotional, intellectual and religious life, the innermost depth, the 'ego' of his personality. 'God, search me and know my heart, probe me and know my thoughts, and guide me on the path that is everlasting!' (Ps 139:23f).

5. Man as member of human society

5.0: When looking for a special 'sociology' in the books of wisdom, one is rather disappointed. Nothing really new is to be found.

5.1: The social structure is simply taken for granted and never called into question. Certain political rulers may be criticized (Qoh 4:13-16), but the institution itself is not assailed.

5.2: Poor people should be helped in their need and to rebuff them is an offence against God himself (Prov 20:17; 21:13; Sir 4:1-6). But they are part of the social set-up: 'The poor will always be with you!' Faithful servants can be treated as brothers because one needs them (Sir 33:31). Their wages must be paid before sunset and to deny their due is equal to murder (Sir 34:22), but they need discipline and should never be idle (Prov 29:19-21; Sir 33:24-28).

5.3: A good wife is man's greatest blessing (Prov 12:4; 31:10-31; Sir 26:4; 13-18). Her charm is a 'possession' more precious than gold (Sir 7:19). What is remarkable in the portrait of the industrious wife is that she can make business transactions on her own and have as it were her private bank account (Prov 31:16-20). But normally she must

be kept in check and under the husband's authority and if defiant must be repudiated (Sir 25:25f). Moreover man should beware of the traditional temptress, the loose woman unfaithful to her husband (Prov. 7:6-27, cfr also Qoh 7:28!).

5.4: As in Ps 8:5-8 and Gn 1:28, man is considered the crown and the king of creation, sharing in God's dominion over animals and plants, which exist only for man's sake: In your wisdom, Lord, you have formed man to rule the creatures that have come from you, to govern the world in holiness and justice and... wield authority in honesty of heart' (Wisd 9:2f).

6. Man in the face of death

6.0: The idea of unavoidable death has haunted the mind of several sapiential writers and soured their taste of life.

6.1. For Job, the road to she'ol is a road of no return and the sojourn among the worms is devoid of joy, love, memory or any human activity (Jb 7:9f; 16:22; 17:14; 21:26).

6.2. Qoh. first asserts that man and beast come to the same end, back to dust. But he then accepts the possibility that the spirit goes upwards (Qoh 3:20f; 12:17). God has put a certain sense of continuity into man's mind but without knowledge of either the beginning or the end of the process. Although death glooms ahead in the darkness of the unknown future, man should grasp the mild and limited enjoyment within that span of time that is revealed to him (Qoh 3:11-13), until the spirit return to the Lord, perhaps as de-personalized ruah (Qoh 11:17).

6.3: The Hebrew version of Ben Sira' can give the impression of a dichotomy between matter and spirit 'All that comes from the earth returns to the earth and what comes from above, returns above (Sir 40:10). But a clear understanding and knowledge of the Semitic notions of basar and ruah should put us on our guard not to read too much into the texts.

6.4: Finally, it is in the Wisdom of Solomon that we find a greater affinity to Hellenistic philosophy. The author speaks explicitly of 'immortality'. It is not just living on

for ever in the memory of man, nor through children who carry on (or defame) the name of the dead ancestor, but a real, personal survival beyond death⁶. Ungodly men 'fail to discern the reward awaiting blameless souls' (W.2:22). They seem to have died, their going is seen as an affliction but 'they are in peace', in God's hand (W. 3:1-3), who has 'taken them away from the wickedness around them' (W. 4:10, 14). The just 'will govern the nations and rule the peoples' (W. 3:8) and be able to keep their intellect and will, 'understand the truth and abide with God in Love' (W. 3: 9).

Reading Wisd. 9:15, one cannot but compare it with Plato's dichotomy: 'The corruptible body weighs down the soul, the tent of clay burdens the worried mind'. And yet, in a later chapter, the author still considers the road to Hades as one of no return: 'A man may kill another, but he cannot bring the departed spirit back, nor release the soul imprisoned in Hades' (W. 16:14). In fact, he still considers matter as pure and Solomon's body as undefiled (*sôma amianton*): 'As a boy I was well endowed, I had received a good soul as my lot; or rather, being good, I entered an undefiled body' (W. 8.19f). Soul and body are still very much the whole person under various aspects and the author never said a word about the 'resurrection' of the physical body!

Conclusion

The most salient feature of anthropology in the Wisdom Literature is the integral, holistic approach of man. Man can be considered according to his many facets, his needs and aspirations, his sensibility, his vital strength and power of perception, but it is always within the synthesizing frame-work of man as a whole. On the other hand, man is viewed in his dialectical tension: these longings and limitations, this frailty and frustration are countered by an openness to progress, enlightenment and fulfilment, a trust and surrender to the One who has 'the heart of man in his hand'.

6. Cf. R. Vande Walle: "Death and Beyond in the Sapiential Literature", *Bible Bhashyam* IV, 1978, pp. 312-321.

‘Man’ in the Teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels

In the teaching of Jesus, as it is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, man is a ruptured being. He is devoid of inner freedom which is his birth right, as he is created in the image and likeness of his Lord and God (Gen. 1:26). Though he is a being-in-God he is not aware of his greatness. He is blindfolded by the passing illusions of day to day life. He would dare to assert self-sufficiency over against the very Source of his being (Gen. 3:1-6). Distanced from the very Fountain-head (Gen. 3:8; Jn. 15:6) he realizes his emptiness (nakedness) and feels the need of a scaffolding that would support him (Gen. 3:7).

The central message of the Synoptic Gospels is that this blindfolded, ill-focussed being is just wandering in the wilderness aimlessly and is tossed about incessantly since he lacks inner dynamism. Therefore, Jesus, the Recreative Word comes into the world in search of this truncated being so that he might engraft him again into the Tree of Life and to make him realize that he is a being-for-Christ. Consequently, call to discipleship, call to take up one's Cross and follow Him etc., have to be understood against this background. It is an invitation to man to restore the lost order that happened in human history and to re-form oneself by liberating from bondage (Rom. 8:19-23).

a. ‘Man’ is a blind being

In spite of his being in the company of his Master man's philosophy of life is quite different from that of the Master whose words and deeds have yet to be rightly grasped: "having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?": Mk. 8:18 shows how blind-sighted and dull-hearted man has become. His set of values is still to be changed which is a laborious process because a thick cloud of darkness has over-shadowed him and the scales that have been formed in his eyes have blurred his vision

(Acts 9:18; Jn. 20:15-16). Even with a double intervention (Mk. 8:22-26) his vision is not fully set right although he thinks that he can see clearly.

That his vision is still partial can be perceived in his dialogue with the Master. Being asked: "Who do you say that I am?" he has, of course, a ready made answer: "You are the Christ" (Mk. 8:29-30)¹. But 'when the Master begins to teach that He is the Suffering Messiah he could not stomach such an idea which was so opposed to his expectations. Therefore, he wants to instruct and advise the Master as if to open His eyes and to change His philosophy of life. The rebuke by the Master is to be seen against this background: "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mk. 8:33). It is important to note that, in this context, the Master is using the very same expression that He had employed in confronting the tempter (Mt. 4:10) who was trying to distort His vision and divert His path².

Man's blindness can be further established when we compare this scene with that of the blind man of Jericho (Mk. 10:46-52). The former is called Satan, an obstacle on the way and so is asked to get away (8:33) and keep quiet (8:30). Whereas the latter is praised and encouraged (10:52a). He follows the Master 'on the way, as an apostle (10:52b)³. The vision of the former (and consequently his

1. According to the mind of the author the blind man of Bethsaida symbolizes Peter and his companions whose eyes are gradually opened, cf. A. Richardson, *The Miracle Stories of the Gospels* (London, 1975), p. 86; K. Kertelge, *Die Wunder Jesu im Markusevangelium* (München, 1970), pp 163-165; J. P. Heil, *Jesus Walking on the Sea* (Rome, 1981), p. 138; C. M. Cherian, "Exodus Spirituality", in: *Vidyajyoti* 42 (1978) 52.

2. The Hebrew noun *satan* (adversary, accuser) stems from the root *shn* which means 'to obstruct, to oppose, to show hostility to'. Generally the LXX renders it by *diabolos* ('devil, seducer, calumniator'), cf. J.S. Wright, "Satan", in: *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology* 3, p. 473 (Exeter, 1978); T.H. Caster, "Satan" in: *IDB* 4 p 225; H. Haug, *La credenza nel diavolo* (Torino, 1976), p. 44; X. Leon-Dufour, dir., *Les miracles de Jesus* (Paris, 1977), pp. 61-62.

3. Cf. V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London, 1974) p 449; L. Schenke, *Die Wundererzahlungen des Markusevangeliums* (Stuttgart, 1975), p. 355; K. Kertelge, op. cit., p. 181; G. Segalla, "La cristologia nella tradizione sinottica dei miracoli", in: *Teologia* 5 (1980) 57-58.

witnessing) is partial and defective. From the above scenes one can see how stark-blinded man is and how difficult it was for the Master to open his eyes to the gospel values.

b. 'Man' is an estranged being

Man is not at home ! His broken relationship on the vertical level affects also his relationships on the horizontal. As the Book of Genesis depicts it very picturesquely the enchanting and thrilling presence of the life-partner (2:23) gradually turns out into a thorn in the flesh and he begins to blame and accuse her (3:12). Such a ruptured relationship paves the way for further inhuman deeds, such as fratricide (4:8), homicide (4:23), and total confusion (11:3-9). As a result man becomes a wanderer. He does not feel at home among his own.

This 'divorced' situation of man has been pictured very graphically by St. Luke. Man wants to be away from his father's house (15:13). He wants to stand by his own thinking. He would find his happiness and the flowering of his personality within his 'little world'.

But, being lost in the wilderness (15:13-16), he has none of his own to comfort and encourage him. In such a helpless and hopeless situation he is made to realize that a branch separated from the vine cannot survive (Jn. 15:6). Thus, he returns to the father's house wherein he finds every comfort (15:17-24). Moreover the ever-extended hand of the Father to embrace him whole-heartedly and to kiss him tenderly shows him the intensity and profundity of his Father's love. He is so touched that with a repentant heart he bursts out: "Father, I confess my stupidity. I wanted to be happy and gay independently of you. I thought that you were a taskmaster. But, now I know that you are my good shepherd who goes in search of the lost and rejoices when the lost is found" (15:22-23, 32; Jn. 10:1-18).

c. 'Man' is a ruptured being

Estranged and isolated, man has become a desert-dweller (Gen. 3:24). Consequently his immediate neighbours are the inhabitants of the desert, i.e., evil spirits

(demons)⁴. The one who wanted to be by himself so as to enjoy his freedom has been surrounded and pestered by such evil forces. Deprived of the abiding presence of the Master, his 'house' is exposed to every sort of danger and they can break in at any time and grab everything.

It is worth noting that the Synoptics speak of this phenomenon explicitly. Demons (unclean spirits are believed to enter into a person (Mk. 5:13; 9:25; Mt. 12:45; Lk. 8:30-33), overpower him (Mk. 9:18-20), speak through his mouth (Mk. 1:24; 5:7-9; Mt. 8:31), cause in him physical and psychical disorders (Mk. 9:18; Mt. 4:24; 8:16-28; 9:32; 11:18; 12:22; Lk. 4:33; 11:14; 13:11)⁵.

To what an extent man is torn 'apart' can be easily seen in the case of the Gerasene demoniac whose abode is in tombs (Mk. 5:1-5). He was invaded and taken possession of by a legion and was out of himself. Since it was an unjust aggression by these malefactors there was a confrontation, a challenge thrown by the Owner of the 'house' bidding these usurpers to clear off (Mk. 5:3, cf. also 1:25; 9:25). But, it is not an easy battle. The expressions: What have you to do with me; I know who you are; I adjure you by God (Mk. 2:14; 5:7) etc. manifest a strong resistance⁶.

At this juncture the Owner of the 'house' who is the Stronger One commands the evil spirit to shut up and get out of the man (Mk. 1:25; 5:8), and to surrender his name⁷.

4. Desert, devastated and impure places are believed to be the dwelling places of demons or demoniacs, cf. L. Kohler, *Hebrew Man* (London, 1974), pp. 136-137; H. Haag, *op. cit.*, p. 36; H. Schurmann, *Das Lukasevangelium I* (Freiburg, 1982), p. 462; F. Annen, *Heil für die Heiden* (Frankfurt am Mainz, 1976), p. 139.

5. This idea develops more extensively during the intertestamentary period under the influence of the Orient, particularly the Persian pneumatology, cf. D.F. Straus, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (London, 1973), p. 413; P.J. Achtemeier, "Gospel Miracle Tradition and the Divine Man", in: *Interpretation* 26 (1972) 183.

6. Cf. H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Leiden, 1966), p. 380; A. Richardsen, *op. cit.*, p. 72; K. Kertelge, *op. cit.*, p. 53; J. M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London, 1974), P. 67.

7. For, surrendering one's name means surrendering oneself, cf.

The name legion and the use of the pronoun 'we' indicate the deep-rootedness or multi-facetedness of the evil. The imperfect tense in Mk. 5:8 shows that there was a lasting resistance. But, in the presence of the Stronger One all these tactics fail. Having no other alternative than to quit, the unclean spirit begs for a substitute: Mk. 5:10 which is a *homoeopathic transfer*, i.e., impure spirits getting into impure animals (swine) to be at home there⁸.

What is remarkable in this context is the change that is taking place in this tomb-dweller, this 'Coliath' whom no chain could curb or tame. No more running about aimlessly; no more torturing himself mercilessly. He is sitting well-dressed and self-composed. Now he has become a restored man; the haunted and dissociated personality has become an integrated and self-controlled one (Mk:5:15), through the intervention of the Master of the 'house'. Therefore, in spite of the negative reaction of the people the 'wholed' man desires to be in the company of the Master (Mk.5:18) and there is no more desire to find his abode in the tombs. Now he is at home.

d. 'Man' is a restored being

Created in the image and likeness of his Creator and Lord, man is meant for something great although, on account of his lack of an active and whole-hearted co-operation, he has remained stunted and dwarfish, molested continually by alien forces.

But, in spite of his constant endeavour to distance himself from the Source of his being man is repeatedly sought after and is taken care of by his Creator in whose company he was walking in the garden (Gen. 3:8) so that by returning home his ruptured personality may begin to flower. Thus the Light goes in search of this blind beggar

H. van der Loss, *op. cit.*, p. 388; R. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford-New York, 1962), p. 232; Taylor *op. cit.*, p. 281; M. Ebon, *Exorcism: Past and Present* (London, 1975), p. 22

8. Cf. M. Bloomfield, *Hymns of the Atharva-veda* (Delhi, Varanasi, 1973), pp. 241, 263-64, N. J. Shende, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Atharvaveda* (Poona, 1952), pp. 19: 24-24; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford, 1937), pp. 449-450

groping in the dark in order to scrape off the scales that have blurred his vision so that, enlightened and encouraged, he may rightly walk 'on the way' joyfully: (Mk. 10:52b). Then, the 'divorced' relationship is restored; the lost son is found. It is this fatherly love and concern that brings about a total change (*metanoia*) in the son. Finally, as the Owner of the 'house' He cannot tolerate any unjust invasion or infiltration of alien forces into it as to make it a haunted house. Therefore, the repeated call to discipleship is an open invitation to re-form man so that he may learn to know that he is a being-for-Christ. Of course, this call is a costly one.

Kripalaya, Mysore - 6

Patrick Crasta

Man in the Johannine Writings

Biblical Anthropology in general is a qualified Anthropology. Bible does not deal with man considered in himself. In the Bible man is presented always in his relation to God. Hence a pure anthropological analysis of man is out of place in the Bible. Another remark that should be made at the very outset is that Biblical Anthropology is different from philosophical Anthropology which analyses man in his constituent elements. Bible presents the whole man in his different aspects. The Johannine Anthropology shares in common these basic characteristics of Biblical Anthropology.

World and Man

John's proclamation consists of the message that "God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). For John the world is primarily the world of men. This is clear from the fact that this world is capable of giving the response of faith. In Jn 1:10 we read: "He was in the world, and the world was made

through him, yet the world knew him not". Here the world is part of the creation mentioned in Jn 1:3, which is that part of creation that is capable of response, namely the world of men. This is reinforced by the statement in Jn 3:19 "The light has come into the world, but men have preferred darkness to light."

Man: Object of God's love

In Jn 3:16 we read that "God so loved the world that he gave his only son...". The verses 16-21 in Jn 3 are probably a reflection by the evangelist¹. He is pondering over the mystery of grace by which law and judgement have been superseded by the Gospel and forgiveness. The divine initiative and the divine purpose are revealed in the last and greatest of God's redemptive acts. The divine initiative in this revelation of God's love is emphasized in 1 Jn 4:10 "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins". Though here in the Epistle the love of God is oriented toward believers ("we"), in the Gospel text 3:16 it is oriented toward the world, namely toward the whole mankind.

Redemptive Love

Especially in the first half of the Gospel there are many references that show God's benevolence and salvific intent toward mankind. Already in Jn 3:17 it was specified that "God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him". Jesus was sent by the Father to save mankind², and to give life to them³. He is the Saviour of the world⁴ and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29).

The tense of the verb 'loved' in Jn 3:16 is 'aorist' and it implies a supreme act of love in the past. The term 'gave' refers not only to the incarnation but also to the sacrificial death of Jesus. There seems to be an implicit

1. Cf. W.F. Howard, "The Gospel according to St. John", in the *Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 8, 509.

2. Cf. Jn. 3:17; 10:36; 12:47.

3. Cf. Jn 6:33, 51.

4. Cf. Jn 4:42; 1 Jn 4:14.

reference to the Old Testament event of Abraham who was commanded to take his only Son Isaac whom he loved to offer to the Lord (Gen 22:2-19)⁵. Even the mention of the 'world' fits in with this background, for Abraham's generosity in sacrificing his only son was to be beneficial to all the nations of the world⁶.

Man in need of salvation

1 Jn 4:14 says, "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world". Both 1 Jn 4:9 and Jn 3:17 speak of the world in connection with God sending his son and that associated with salvation. Since the world is related to the salvific action of God and Christ, the 'world' here is to be understood as the sphere of human beings and of human experience. The Johannine writings use the term 'kosmos' 102 times, in sum 55% of the total New Testament usage. About half the time the Johannine writings speak of "the world" 'which is often personified as the subject of verbs such as 'know', 'receive', 'see', 'hate' 'love', etc. From this it is clear that the reference is to a world of human beings. Therefore John presents Jesus as the Saviour of human beings.

Jesus: Light of the World

In Jn 8:12 Jesus says: "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". In the actual ceremonies of Tabernacles, as they had developed by Jesus' time, on the first night (and perhaps on the other nights as well) there was a ritual of lighting four golden candlesticks in the court of the women and when they were lit, it is said that all Jerusalem reflected the light that burned in the court of the Women. It is in this background that Jesus proclaims that he is the light, not only of Jerusalem but of the whole world. Elsewhere in the Johannine writings, we read that God is light with no admixture of darkness (1 Jn 1:5). In Jesus this light and life has come into the world⁷ to dispel the darkness. Shining forth in him as the incarnate revealer,

5. Cf. R.E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, vol.1. London 1971, 147

6. Cf. Gen 22:18; Sir 44:21; Job 18:15.

7. Jn 1:4-5; 3:19.

God's light irradiates human existence and gives man knowledge of the purpose and meaning of life.

The Life: Light of men

John in the Prologue to his Gospel says: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (Jn 1:4). There is a lot of discussion on the textual problem concerning this text⁸. Most of the exegetes prefer the reading "That which came to be in him was life", taking v. 3b with v. 4.

The term used for 'life' is *zoe* and it means always 'eternal life' in the Johannine Writings. Also the identification of this life with the light of men, makes us think that 'eternal life' is meant. In the prologue to 1 John, 'life' is specified as 'eternal life'.

In vv. 4-5 of the Prologue, as in the first verses, there is a deliberate parallelism, to the opening chapters of Genesis. 'Light' was God's first creation (Gen 1:3). 'Life' is also a theme of the creation account. Chapters 2:9 and 3:22 of Genesis speak of the tree of life whose fruit, when eaten, would make man live forever. Man was shut off from this life by his sin. But as we see in Rev. 22:2, the eternal life of the Garden of Eden prefigured the life that Jesus would give to men. So in these verses the author says that "That which had especially come to be in God's creative word was the gift of eternal life. This life was the light of men because the tree of life was closely associated with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If man had survived the test, he would have possessed eternal life and enlightenment. The v.5 also may be interpreted against this background. It says: "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it". There was an attempt by darkness to overcome the light, namely the fall of man. The aorist tense of 'overcome' refers to that single past action. But the light shines on, for although man sinned, a ray of hope was given to him.

The true Light that enlightens every man

In Jn 1:9 we read "The true light that enlightens

8. For a detailed discussion of this textual problem, cf. R.E. Brown, "The Gospel according to John", vol I, New York, 1966, 6-7.

every man was coming into the world". The picture of light coming into the world to enlighten men is a messianic one taken from the O.T., particularly from Isaiah (cf. Is. 9:2; 42:6; 60:1-2). Jesus is the light in so far as is the revelation of God. He is the true light, namely the authentic self-revelation of God. This light of Jesus remains at all times a light that enlightens every human being. 'The true light' may mean the genuine as opposed to the false or the eternally real in distinction from the transient and illusory reflection of it. The statement that Jesus 'enlightens' every man' is potential rather than actual, and must be limited by the qualifications laid down in v.12 in terms of faith⁹.

Men and Darkness

In Jn 3:19 we read; "This is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil". The same idea is expressed in Jn 1:10 "He (the light) was in the world, and the world came into being through it, yet the world knew him not." The underlying anthropological vision is that man is under the sway of darkness - darkness not as a shadow lying upon him, not as an affliction imposed upon him, but as his own peculiar nature in which he is at ease and at home. Just this, that man appropriates to himself this darkness, can come to expression in the judgement that men are blind, blind without knowing it and without wanting to acknowledge it. This is clear in the dramatic scene of the blind man receiving spiritual sight over against the pharisees becoming blind: "Jesus said, "For judgement I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." Some of the pharisees near him heard this, and they said to him, "Are we also blind?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see', your guilt remains." (Jn 9:39-41)¹⁰

⁹ Cf. W.F. Howard and A.J. Corsip, "The Gospel according to St. John", in the *Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 8, Nashville, 1978, 470.

¹⁰ Cfr. also in Jn 2:11.

Men and Falsehood

Mankind is also characterized by John as falsehood, Jesus' assertion that he came into the world to bear witness to the truth (Jn 18:37) is an indirect reference to this. Such indirect references could be seen in other contexts in the Gospel where Jesus promises knowledge of the truth to him who remain in his word (Jn 8:32), and where Jesus is presented as the truth (Jn 14:6). Man's intrinsic connection to falsehood is asserted where Jesus accuses the Jews of not being able to hear his word, because they are of the devil i.e. sprung from falsehood, and therefore do not believe when Jesus says the truth (Jn 8:43-45). In Johannine dualism, lying is equivalent to darkness. It is part of the diabolic realm that is opposed to the truth and light of God. Thus when Jesus characterizes the Jews as 'being of the devil who is a liar', it is not a question of occasional deception, but of fundamental perversion¹¹.

Man's Existence in Bondage

So 'darkness' and 'falsehood' are a power to which man has fallen in bondage, an idea that is expressed by the promise of freedom to those who know the truth: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free." (Jn 8:31-32) So the condition of the humanity is essentially a condition of bondage or an existence in bondage¹².

Existence in bondage to sin

This existence is one of bondage to sin which is clear from the very context speaking of freedom. When Jesus spoke of the truth which would make them free, the Jews reacted saying that they, being descendants of Abraham, had no need of a liberation from slavery. The Jews seem to have misunderstood Jesus, words about freedom and take it in a political sense. But even in this sense their claim was ill-founded, for Egypt, Babylonia and Rome had enslaved them. Perhaps they meant that being the

11. Cfr. R.E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, vol I, 364-365.

12. Cf. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* II, London, 1967:15-16

privileged heirs to the promise to Abraham, they could not be truly enslaved, although occasionally God allowed them to be chastised through temporary subjection. Anyway Jesus refutes their claim by showing that they are really slaves to sin: "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin (Jn 8:34).

Sin and the power of evil

The Greek term 'hamartia' for sin is used by John 34 times and out of it 10 are in the plural. This reflects the outlook of John who is more concerned about the fundamental reality of sin or the root of sinfulness than with sinful acts of species of sins¹³.

John gives a definition in 1 Jn 3:3 "Sin is iniquity". The Greek term for iniquity is 'anomia', and it literally means 'lawlessness'. There are some authors who interpret it in the literal sense¹⁴. However, the interpretation which takes it in the sense of apocalyptic iniquity seems to be more acceptable. The term 'anomia' is used with definite article so that it indicates a definite and well-known predicate. Sin is here being identified as 'the iniquity' which is the expected state of hostility at the end of the world. In 1 Jn 2:18 the troublemakers in the Johannine Church were identified as the manifestation of the respected anti-christ. Now their sins, toward which they are indifferent, are identified as manifestation of the expected iniquity.

What evidence do we have for such a meaning of 'anomia'? The root meaning of the term is 'Lawlessness' or 'rejection of the Law' and it would involve in the Jewish outlook rebelliousness against God, the giver of the Law. 'Anomia' would, therefore, be appropriate to the final manifestation of evil as anti-God, and for Christians as anti-Christ. In the Septuagint, 'anomia' translates the Hebrew word *awol* or *awla*, which is a frequent Dead Sea Scroll terminology to describe the realm of iniquity opposed to the realm of God's truth and justice. So John seems to

13. Cf. H. Braun, "Literar-Analyse und theologische Schichtung im ersten Johannesbrief" ZTK 48 (1951), 265.

14. For a detailed study of the interpretation of this text of R.E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, New York 1982, 399-400.

have such an apocalyptic view of the end-time, specially because he counterposes 'doing justice' (1 Jn. 2:29) and 'doing sin', which is iniquity (1 Jn 3:4). Hence to be in 'bondage to sin' is identified with being in bondage to the devil.

Jesus and the World

Before the coming of the light the whole world was in darkness or in death. In 1 Jn 5:19 we read: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one". By the coming of Jesus the Light, the question is put to man whether he chooses to remain in darkness or in the realm of the evil one. By sending his Son into the world, God put the world, so to say, in the balance: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin." (Jn 15:22) Man cannot act otherwise than as he is. But in the Revealer's call there opens up to him the possibility of being otherwise than he was. He can exchange his origin, his essence for another; he can be born again (Jn 3:3f) and thus attain his true being. In his decision between faith and un-faith a man's being definitively constitutes itself, and from then on his origin becomes clear. By its opposition to the Revealer, the 'world' definitively constitutes itself as 'world'.

Man in confrontation with the light

Confrontation with light divides humanity into two: 'those who do not come to the light' and 'those who come to the light': "And this is the judgement that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God." (Jn 3:19-21)

If there is a twofold response to Jesus in John, negative and positive, we can see that this response is very much dependent on man's own choice, a choice that is influenced by his way of life, by whether his deeds are wicked or are done in God. Thus there is no determinism

in John as there seems to be in some passages of the Qumran scrolls. Jesus is a penetrating light that provokes judgement by making it apparent what a man is. The one who turns away is not an occasional sinner but one who 'practices wickedness'. It is not that he cannot see the light, but that he hates the light. As S. Lyonnet insists in his article on sin in John¹⁵, it is a question of radical evil in man.

Man's authentic existence

The fact that Jesus is the light that manifests the real self of man implies that it is in the light of Jesus that man discovers his authentic self or existence. John speaks of 'walking' or 'working' in the light (or, by day) or of the opposite, 'walking' in darkness (or, in the night). Only in the light is it possible to walk and work sure of one's way. In the dark a man is blind and cannot find his way¹⁶. Light is understood in its 'original sense: the daylight in which man is able not only to orient himself about objects but also to understand himself in his world and find his way in it. But the 'true light' (Jn 1:9; 1 Jn 2:8) is not that of the day literally, but the state of having one's existence illumined, an illumination in and by which a man understands himself, achieves a self-understanding which opens up his way to him, guides all his conduct, and gives him clarity and assurance. Since creation is a revelation of God and the 'Word' is at work as the light in that which was created, then man is given the possibility of a genuine self-understanding in the possibility of understanding himself as God's creature. Darkness, then, means that instead of understanding himself as creature he arrogates to himself a self-sovereignty that belongs to the Creator alone. It is a revolt against the light, the origin of one's existence.

Truth and Man's authentic existence

The basic meaning of 'truth' in John is God's reality revealed in Jesus Christ. So the liberating knowledge of

15. VD 35 (1957), 271-278

16. Cf. Jn 9:4; 11:9f; 12:35; 1 Jn 2:11

truth in Jn 8:31-32 is not the rational knowledge of the reality in general, but the knowledge granted to men of faith, of God's reality revealed in Jesus Christ. Note the parallelism between Jn 8:32 "the truth will make you free" with Jn 8:36 "if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed". To be of the truth¹⁷ is synonymous with "to be of God"¹⁸. So the liberation that the 'Truth' offers is a liberation from all that hinders an authentic human existence.

'Son' and 'Slave' in the House

In the context of speaking about freedom John introduces a parable: "The slave does not continue in the house forever; the son continues forever." (Jn 8:35) This parable illustrates the nature of the freedom that is presented here. It is not a mere liberation in the negative sense of the term, but a positive status enjoyed by the 'sons' in the household unlike the 'slaves'. In other words the authentic human existence is the existence proper to the children of God. So in John's view there is no authentic human existence apart from the faith — that is, existence illumined by faith in Jesus Christ the light and the truth.

Authentic human life and fulness of life

If God is the sole reality, then 'life' is simply openness to God and to him who makes God manifest. Hence Jesus says: "This is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (Jn 17:3) 'Eternal life' and 'Life' are terms used by John interchangeably. The adjective 'eternal' is used by John more in the sense of 'quality' than in that of 'duration'. By possessing 'eternal life' man comes to possess the 'fulness of life'. Jesus says: "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (Jn 10:10) In turning his back to Jesus the Truth, man simultaneously turns away from 'life'. In coming to Jesus and believing in him, man simultaneously comes to enjoy the 'eternal life', 'fulness of life' his authentic human existence.

17. Cf. Jn 18:37; 1 Jn 2:21; 3:19

18. Cf. Jn 7:17; 8:47; 1 Jn 3:10; 4:1f; 5:19

Birth into an authentic life

The authentic human existence which implies a sharing in the divine life through faith in Jesus Christ is on the level of the spirit. It is a 'birth from above' (Jn 3:3) and a 'birth from water and Spirit' (3:5). Man as flesh cannot rise by himself to the level of the Spirit. The fact that this new birth is conditioned by the work of the Spirit of God does not exclude the human freedom and decision. The statements like Jn 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him", do not go against the human freedom. The Father's "drawing" does not precede the believer's "coming" to Jesus. It simply means that faith is not the accomplishment of one's own purposeful act, but God's working in man.

Before the light's coming man was in darkness. But by the coming of the light the question is put to man whether he chooses to remain in darkness, in death. By sending his Son into the world God put man in the balance: "If I had not come and spoken to them they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin." (Jn 15:22) Man cannot act otherwise than as he is, but in the Revealer's call there opens up to him the possibility of being otherwise than he was. He can 'be born again' (Jn 3:3) and thus attain to his true being. In his decision between faith and unbelief a man's being definitively constitutes itself, and from then on his origin and nature become manifest. So attaining the authentic human existence is the work both of the Spirit of God and the free decision of man.

Mathew Vellanickal

This Man Jesus

1. Belittling the human

A hymn for Eucharistic communion in a catholic hymnal has the following refrain: "I've received the living God/ And my heart is filled with joy."¹ This line reflects an understanding of Jesus which is widespread. What is the Eucharist? what or whom do you receive in it? The answer from most boys and girls, or from grown-ups, for that matter, has been: I receive God. This sounds quite religious and pious. Therefore we tend to overlook its inadequacy and the twist it gives to the truth about Jesus. Discuss christian discipleship; at some point or other the question is sure to rise, 'But who could follow Jesus and forgive or dissent as he did? He was God!' There are christians who pray almost always to Jesus, and are baffled by the discovery that ancient liturgies invariably direct their prayer to the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. Theology, preaching and catechesis have been concentrating on the divinity of Jesus in such a way that awareness of his humanity has blurred in many minds. "Jesus is a much underrated man", grieves Albert Nolan; underrated especially by his worshippers². Once Jesus is thought of exclusively as God his mediatory role becomes obscured. Other mediators are soon sought and found in holy Mary and the many saints. Saúl Trinidad refers to an inscription in the colonial church of Cuzco, Perú: "Come to Mary, all ye who toil and are burdened, and she will give you rest."³ As Mary takes the place of Jesus, Jesus takes the Father's place, and the central christian revelation of God as Trinity becomes redundant; its influence on spirituality wanes, and its significance for life dwindles and dies out.

1) *With Joyful Lips*. (St. Catherine's Home, Andheri, Bombay, 1984) series D.

2) Albert Nolan; *Jesus Before Christianity* (New York: Orbis Bs., 1978)p. 117

3) Saul Trinidad; *Christology, Conquista, Colonization*. In *Faces of Jesus, Latin American Christologies*, edited by Jose Miguez Bonino. (New

Dogma and theology have often presented Jesus as one "whose manhood has been blotted out" by the glory of his Divinity; or as one "who shares our essence but not our existence"; or one who "possesses our nature but none of its problems, its history, its experience"⁴. In many theologies and most mission churches as well as their European bases, the emphasis on Christ's Divinity has led to a deformation of his humanity. There arose as a result a docetist or disincarnate Christ, 'half human, half angelic', an over-spiritualized Christ, a Christ in the clouds, de-contextualized, alien to our earth, foreign to every human reality, and far removed from the world of our needs and endeavours⁵. When Jesus came to be imagined and treated in this way, a beautiful and powerful fountain of authentic humanism dried up, and the emergence of a compassionate, free, creative and warm social order got blocked, and ground was cleared for abstract, rigid and cold socio-religious policies and authoritarian structures.

The process of minimising Jesus' manhood started early in the history of the christian movement. The Ebionites of old argued that the body of Jesus was fashioned in some heavenly realm out of incorruptible star-stuff, and not in a woman's womb nor out of human flesh. Luke's beautiful theological presentation of Jesus' birth, with the angel, the Virgin, the star and the celestial choir, was soon used in such a way as to 'banish Christ to an unreal world of fairy lights'⁶. The second century writer Clement of Alexandria held that Jesus was "entirely impassible". Jesus had no need of food; he could feel neither pleasure nor pain; he was so perfect that there was no room in him for courage, fear, or zeal. Similar ideas were entertained

York: Orbis Books, 1984) p. 60; A. Nolan: *op. cit.*, p. 117; Peter De Rosa, *Christ and Original Sin* (COS), (London: Chapman, 1987) pp. 40, 53-54

4) Peter De Rosa: *Jesus Who Became Christ* (London: Collins 1975) p. 192

5) Joao Dias de Araujo: Images of Jesus in the Culture of Brazilian People, in Bonino, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38; Saul Trinidad and Juan Stamm: Christ in Latin American Protestant Preaching, in Bonino, *op. cit.*, p. 42

6) John Robinson: *But That I can't Believe*. (London, 1987) pp. 28-29
Peter De Rosa; *JBC*, pp. 59-68, 78-84

two centuries later by Hilary of Poitiers on the ground that the humanity of Jesus was from God ⁷. The Middle Ages loved to think of Jesus as credited with the Beatific Vision and the fulness of spiritual happiness and all conceivable human and angelic knowledge from the first moment of his existence in his mother's womb. To reconcile this with the experience of Gethsemane and Calvary, great thinkers like Thomas Aquinas divided the soul of Jesus into regions: the upper regions enjoyed the ultimate vision and bliss like mountain peaks bathing in everlasting sunlight while the lower regions were clouded by divine abandonment and the pain of life. But if Jesus appeared to be lacking in knowledge, or learning something, or emptied, he was only withholding information from us or teaching us humility or giving us good example ⁸!

Being aberrations on the right side and in favour of divinity, such views have enjoyed official acceptance and a long life. They were subscribed to by men like Mathias Scheeben, admittedly the greatest of 19th century theologians⁹. Pius XII could teach in 1943 that Jesus in his historical life enjoyed the beatific vision in a more excellent way than the saints in heaven did¹⁰. As late as 1960 a Roman Professor insisted that my doctoral thesis should subscribe to Jesus' Beatific Vision and omniscience at least as 'commonly held theological opinion'. Even today it is not rare to see Jesus presented as "an amalgam of God and man", with two minds, two wills, two natures, and contrary attributes, being simultaneously all-powerful and utterly weak, infinite and finite, the weak and the finite tending, naturally, to thin and vanish. Down the centuries, then, christian thinkers (and pastors) have been advocating what De Rosa calls "a theology of pretence". They have been campaigning to get Jesus feign normality while he

7) Cf. James M. Carmody and Thomas E. Clarke; *Word and Redeemer* (Glen Rock, N. J., 1966) pp. 27 and 69.

8) *Summa Theol.* III. 7:12; 9:3; 12:3; 15:6

9) Mathias Scheeben; *The Mysteries of Christianity* (St. Louis: Herder, 1951). Dom Aelred Graham; *The Christ of Catholicism* (London, 1947)

10) Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (The Mystical Body of Christ). section 46

was quite unlike us despite the dogmas. The miracle stories of the Gospels also have constituted a solid obstacle to seeing Jesus as truly human. Faced with difficult problems, Jesus did not have to agonise or struggle: he had only to employ his divine magic to heal, to feed, to calm wind and sea. That this emphasis on his divinity has made acceptance of his humanity a problem may be seen in believers' anxious queries such as: did or could Jesus smile? did he laugh? or crack jokes? was he naughty when he was a little boy? did he indulge in temper tantrums?¹¹ To crown all this, Jesus is said to be 'true man' but not a human person; his human personhood has been replaced by the divine Person of God's Son. As a consequence, in theology, in piety and in daily life the man Jesus has suffered considerable erosion. There is deep-seated practical unbelief in his humanity. Jesus is more readily accepted as a god walking our earth, disguised in human semblance, "god going through the motions of being a man when, in truth, he is not." Superhumanized and angelized, Jesus is no longer one of us, a man among men with whom we can identify ourselves. The technique has been to make Jesus spiritual, heavenly and universal. Take him out of the total reality and particularity of the moment in which he lived. Make him non-historical. The meaning of such a Christ would, then, be exclusively religious. He would have little or nothing to say to agonising human concerns in the world of economic, political and social realities. It is surprising that such an unbiblical and idealized portrait of Jesus has become so popular in the churches for so long¹².

The churches have upheld "the humanity of Jesus as orthodoxy and the incarnation as dogma". They have yet to take Jesus seriously "in all his humanity and historicity". They have yet to heed the call of the *Flesh* of Jesus to free our faith from gnostic and docetic tendencies, and convert it into discipleship and historical prac-

11) Peter De Rosa: *JBC*, pp. 1-2, 92-95, 101-110

12) Cf. Segundo Galilea: Jesus' Attitude Towards Politics. Some Working Hypotheses. in Bonino, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95. J. Severino Croatto: The Political Dimension of Christ the Liberator, *Ibid*, pp. 102-106. Raul Vidales: How should we Speak of Christ Today? *Ibid.*, pp. 139-141

ticé¹³. An important task of theology today and all christian communication is "to convince the faithful that God's Son is truly a man among men and not God in fancy dress". In effect, we must not begin by saying Jesus is God, as if we already knew what Godhead is all about. We must not begin with 'a truth', but with a human life, its events, experiences and vicissitudes. And then attend to their significance, and to the further, deeper realities they reveal¹⁴.

2. His life and its vicissitudes

Admittedly, getting back to Jesus' historical life is no easy task. The Gospels are not biography, not history. They are faith documents expressing the resurrection experience of early christians; they are theological works which interpret and re-interpret the message of Jesus for concrete situations with the aid of historical reminiscences, myths and symbols¹⁵. They yield us (in Lightfoot's words) "only the whisper of Jesus' voice" and (we may add) an outline of his figure and mere fragments of his life. Even the outline varies from author to author; and everything has been reviewed and reshaped in the light of the resurrection faith. Nevertheless, the Gospels can be a source of information. Between the experience of the risen Christ and the historical life of Jesus there is real continuity. The resurrection faith itself is cast in the form of chronicles of the ministry of Jesus. Believers knew that the risen Lord was present, and were convinced that "Jesus who speaks is the Jesus who once spoke". The Jesus of the Gospel story is the historical Jesus of Nazareth and the risen Lord of Peter's vision¹⁶. Though the Gospel text forms a parti-

13) Saul Trinidad and Juan Stamm; art. cit., in Bonino, *op.cit.* p.44

14) Peter De Rosa; *COS*, pp. 54-57

15) Cf. Norman Perrin: *The New Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich, 1974); *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia, 1969). For application of Redaction critical method to Mark, see W. Marxsen: *Mark the Evangelist* (Geneva 1956); to Luke, see H. Conzelmann: *Theology of Luke* (New York, 1960); to Matthew, see G. Bornkamm: *Tradition and Interpretation* (Westminster 1963). Also Bornkamm: *Jesus of Nazareth* [New York, Harper and Row, 1961].

16) N. Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* pp. 70-79

tion separating us from the Jesus of history, still "the figure and personage of Jesus emerging from the general context and sense of the accounts can be considered historically reliable"¹⁷. The Synoptics identify Jesus with the risen Christ and offer a clear account of the kind of man Jesus was. They give a general impression through representative events and sayings; and impressions reveal more about a person than lists of his achievements¹⁸. James Breech's thesis is "that the historical Jesus is discovered in his sayings and parables"¹⁹. Concluding a survey of the discussion on the Historical Jesus, James Mackey writes: "Nothing that we have so far seen precludes the possibility of encountering the real, historical Jesus; provided, of course, that we recognize the modern perspective for what it is and refuse to allow any of its specific forms to turn into dominating preconceptions... The historical Jesus may hold some creative surprises for us, too, if we truly set out in search of him and refuse simply to sketch his portrait according to any set of recent or contemporary specifications"²⁰.

It is therefore possible "to meditate on the human — simply human — life of Jesus Christ...this Jesus of Nazareth just as his disciples knew him and understood him — or did not understand him — when they walked with him in the rough valleys of Galilee, roaming the villages of Israel, when they did not yet know him as Lord and the Son of God"²¹. If the humanity of Jesus comes so well through these theological interpretations suffused with the splendour of the resurrection faith, that humanity surely was rich and memorable, and of central significance.

17. L. Boff: *Images of Jesus in Brazilian Liberal Christianity*, in Bonino: *op. cit.*, p. 20

18. Arthur Wainwright: *Beyond Biblical criticism* (London: SPCK, 1982) pp. 21-23

19. James Breech: *The Silence of Jesus, The Authentic Voice of the Historical Man*. (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1983) p. 217. cf pp. 1-8

20. James P. Mackey: *Jesus the Man and the Myth* [New York: Paulist Press, 1979] P. 51. also p. 270 on the unity of christian faith and critical history.

21. Jose Granblin: *Jesus Nazareth: Meditations on His Humanity* (New York: Orbis Books, 1976) p. 1

The humanity of Christ is not an idea, but "a truly human life". Its "human significance constitutes the key to knowing the true God"²². It would be wrong to give the impression that "divinity and humanity in Jesus constitute two realities". In Christ we do not have to "reconcile" the divine and the human. In him the divine and the human make one single mystery of faith. Jesus the man is the expression of God. To quote De Rosa: "The human is that by which alone we encounter God and by which God embodies himself and so approaches us". Jesus' human activity "is his divine activity in the only way in which both he and we can appreciate and experience it"²³. It is in the humanity and life story of Jesus that God is revealed rather than in what we call the 'divine' in Christ's life. Divinity is best disclosed at the most human of his humanity: "when he was overwhelmed by sorrow, loneliness and suffering, and when he succumbed to death". De Rosa concludes that to get a child to profess "Jesus is God" is "in itself no triumph for religion. Until (the child) has learned a little about the man "Jesus" he doesn't know what he is talking about"²⁴. Jesus gave himself no titles. He was too original to do that, and too solidary with the lowly classes and the socially disqualified. The divine and the messianic lay hidden in his historical life, and was discovered by the early church in the light of the resurrection. The divinity was neither sought nor found outside his humanity; the surprising discovery of faith was that Jesus was so radically human that he could only be divine²⁵.

We would therefore join Ignacio Ellacuria in insisting that a people struggling to transform society (as distinct from a few intellectuals seeking speculative appreciation of the christian faith) needs a doctrine of Christ based on Jesus' flesh and history (as distinct from a doctrine based on the idealistic *logos* of the Greeks). This

22. J. Comblin, *op.cit.*, n. 7

23. Peter De Rosa, *JBC*, pp. 102-95. cf. 104:202-205

24. P. De Rosa, *COS*, pp. 811-12

25. cf. L. Boff, *Christ the Liberator* [New York: Orbis Books 1973] pp. 146:147; id., art. cit. in Bonino, *op.cit.*, pp. 24,27. A Nolan, *op. cit.*, p. 118-119.

flesh-and-history or humanity of Jesus is the place of revelation. 'The actual historical course of the life of Jesus is the decisive element.' Jesus' historical life (the facts of which are only partially known) "is the fullest revelation of the God confessed by Christians". "The path of the Father's revelation passes through the life of Jesus". Only by following Jesus and leading his life ourselves can we reach what the Father has disclosed²⁶.

3. Like us in all things

A striking witness to Jesus' earthly humanity is the letter to the Hebrews. It lays a clear accent on the fact that Jesus was an intimate participant in our lowly flesh and our painful history. According to Hebrews 2:10-18 the saving mission of Jesus corresponds to and depends upon the authenticity of his humanity. God destined Jesus to be the leader of our salvation, to bring many sons into glory; therefore God made him perfect through suffering. Jesus was to be our sanctifier; therefore he had to be of the same stock as we are; he had to be brother among brothers and sisters; he and we 'form a single whole'²⁷. Jesus' vocation was to be with God's children, a child among children; therefore he shared equally in the same mortal blood and flesh as children share. Jesus was chosen to be our compassionate and trustworthy high priest; therefore he had to be "completely like his brothers". He must have the ability to help all who are tempted; therefore "he has himself been through temptation". A close link is thus established between Jesus' saving work as leader, sanctifier and priest on the one hand and his being truly human on the other. Hebrews is explicit on this point. "It was essential that he (Jesus) should in this way become *completely like his brothers* so that he could be a compassionate and trustworthy high priest...That is, because he has himself been through temptation he is able to help others who are tempted". For the author of the letter no emphasis on Jesus' humanity is too much. "For it was not the angels

²⁶ Ignace Ellacuría: The Political Nature of Jesus' Mission, in Bonino, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-82

²⁷ Jerusalem Bible, note to Hebr 2:11

that he (God) took to himself; he took to himself descent from Abraham." The likeness in question extends beyond Jesus' physical constitution (stock, seed, blood, flesh); it affects the deepest reality of Jesus' human spirit. As a person Jesus is made perfect through suffering and severe testing. Tamper with this humanity of his; undermine it ever so little; the whole work of redemption would dissolve.

According to Hebrews Jesus qualifies to serve as exalted and helpful high priest precisely because he is capable of "feeling our weakness with us", because he is "one who has been tempted in every way what we are though without sin", Heb. 4:14-16. The idea is that it is authentic and profound humanity that defines the (high) priest (which is Hebrews' cultural symbol for services of saving faith and freedom). A priest is essentially one who "can sympathise with those who are ignorant and uncertain because he too lives in the limitations of weakness", Heb. 5:2. Perhaps the most telling witness to the humanity of Jesus is the following from Hebrews:

"During his life on earth, (in the days of his flesh), he offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly, (such was his religious awe), that his prayer was heard. Although he was Son, he learned to obey through suffering, but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation..." 5:7-9.

Surely this man is like us, and we like him. In his loud cry and tears before God don't we recognize ourselves? In his humble submission, in his godly fear, in the religious awe with which he prays to God, don't we touch the human at its most authentic, its deepest, its humanest? Throughout the letter Jesus' humanity is consistently kept in mind. Jesus is of the tribe of Judah; he lives for ever to intercede for us; he is mediator; he has been called by God and given a ministry; he comes into God's presence with the offering of his own blood, his human life poured out in service of his sisters and brothers (5:4; 7:13-14,24; 8:6; 9:14, 24-25; 12-24).

4. To save life or to kill ?

Were we to read the Gospels with quiet discernment, undazzled by the light of the resurrection as it shines out of the titles and wonder-works the early church ascribed to Jesus, we are sure to come across some of Jesus' remarkable human traits. Jesus strikes us as a man of rare freedom and fearlessness. He was a non-institutional and unconventional figure. Totally authentic and independent. Remarkable for the courage of his convictions and his positive insights. A man with no grudge against the world, and no trace of fear of losing his reputation, or creating a scandal, or staking his life. Neither ascetic nor masochist, but an enjoyer of good food and wine and flowers and friendships²⁸. Alive, and engaged with what is alive in everything around him, and awake to "what is new in every moment"²⁹. A man in close and respectful contact with the common, the small, the particular, the neglected. He had a style of his own, "his own mode of being human" in which he was "the most unimitative and original master". One who nevertheless called fourth the free and the unique in others. Through his parables and sayings "he communicated to others the possibility of perceiving that which is "counter, original, spare, and strange"³⁰.

It is lovely to watch the ease and the quiet confidence with which Jesus handles hostile questions (about the resurrection, the identity of the neighbour, tax to Caesar, killing of faithless wives) and re-interprets or sets aside laws, taboos and traditions (about sabbath rest, ritual purity, tithes, fasts and vows). Without demur, with grace and sureness of step, Jesus crossed frontiers of conventional respectability and orthodoxy, mixed with social undesirables, ate with outcasts and publicans, let the ritually unclean touch him, and made the lowly, the leper and the prostitute welcome. He debunked the establishment and its piety in favour of human beings and of life in abun-

28. A. Nolan, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-119

29. J. Breech: *op. cit.*, p. 221

30. *Id.*, *op. cit.*, p. 219

dance. With him justice and mercy counted far more than temple and priest. Jesus of the Gospels is not exactly a "religious" person, but one who is "free of rites, formulas and marked hours"³¹.

Jesus did not flee the world. he loved the earth, he was fond of people, he immersed himself in questions of their weal and woe. For that very reason he would not conform to given social mores which lacked human content. He did not fit into the power systems of Church or State. He resisted them when he found their values and interests hurtful to human beings or oriented away from the physical, social and spiritual welfare of women and men. Herod Antipas had killed people and was planning to kill again. Jesus defied him though he was Herod's subject. Fox, he called his king, and ignored him to the end (Mk 6:17-29; Lk 13:31-33; 22:8-11). One Sabbath morning, as a man with a withered hand stood in the middle of a Synagogue assembly, Jesus put a pointed question to the religious leaders — a question which engaged his humanity and echoed with its throb. Is it permitted on a Sabbath day to do good and save life or only to kill or leave life maimed? What has priority: the Sabbath law or the health and life of this man? (Mk 3:1-6)

Not only the Synoptics but John too remembers Jesus as one who took a stand against death, the structures of death and all destroyers of life. Men zealous for the Law would avenge its violation by stoning a faithless wife to death. Jesus sides with life and defeats the religion of law and death and offers the woman fresh hope and a new future (Jn 8:1-11). To the Jews Jesus said:

You want to kill me. You are putting into action the lesson you learned from your father. You want to kill me. You are doing what your father does. The devil is your father. And you prefer to do what your father wants. He was a murderer from the start (Jn 8:37-44).

31. J. Comblin: *op. cit.*, p. 99. Carlos Mesters in Bonino, *op. cit.*, p. 32. J. Breech, *op. cit.*, p. 219, parables of Jesus do not refer to the supernatural, nor do they deal with religious beliefs and practices.

Now John observes that it was "to undo the work that the devil had done" that Jesus came (1 Jn 3:8). Every-one of Jesus' moves was directed to the defence and restoration of life, and to the undoing of the demonic that thwarted life in many ways. Jesus' ministry of exorcism was an attack on the "possessors" and dominators of people. Action against powers, structures and traditions which constricted life and violated dignity and personhood (cf Lk 11:14-22; Mk 1:21-23; 3:22-27; 5:11-20; 7:24-30; 9:14-29). No smaller is the concern for life embodied in Jesus' work of healing and feeding and ingathering of the lowly and table fellowship with outcasts and bad characters.

This commitment to life enlarged Jesus' freedom to indict the leaders of the people: The pharisee who laid heavy burdens on people; the scribe who devoured the property of widows; the priest whose piety and purity chose to pass by the broken and bleeding man on the roadside; and the rich who amassed wealth and lived in luxury while the dispossessed suffered, decayed and died (Mt 23:3-4; Mk 12:30-40; Lk 12:16-21; 16:19-26; 10:29-37). Because religion has lost touch with justice and mercy, its symbol, the temple, shall be destroyed with no stone left on stone. The callous rich, become camelised, have debarred themselves from the Kingdom. But the publicans and prostitutes shall go into the Kingdom before you, scribes, pharisees, hypocrites (Mt 21:31; Mk 10:17-97; 13:1-2). Examples could be multiplied of Jesus' spirit of freedom and innovative unconventionality and courage. But it is important to pass from these positive characteristics of the personality of Jesus to his limitations which point even more tellingly to the humanity he shares with us. De Rosa puts it effectively: "A christian who is not interested in Jesus of Nazareth is not interested in God. Equally, not to be interested in Jesus' limitations is to be uninterested in Jesus." ³²

5. Elected lowliness

Our search for the humanity of Jesus must get beyond a listing of what he and we have in common with animals.

It won't do to stop after saying, 'he was born, he hungered and thirsted, grew tired and died'. We must look for what is specifically human and particularly personal³³. A first note-worthy fact is Jesus' own admission of limits to his knowledge. Jesus said that nobody knows the day of the coming of the Son of Man, "neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, no one but only the Father." Theologies of pretence and theologies of uneasiness with the concretely human have tried to explain away the obvious meaning of the text, and compel Jesus to be all-knowing. To do so is not fair to the text, nor fair to Jesus nor honest to ourselves. There were things Jesus did not know. Not only was the day of the Son of Man beyond the range of Jesus' knowledge; but likewise also most of world history, most of our sciences, languages and discoveries were as little known to Jesus as to his contemporaries. To say this is no disrespect to Jesus. It is, on the contrary, the only way to honour his truth. To say this is no reflection on Jesus' divinity. It is the only way for the divine to become manifest in history. "If God comes to us, it must always be in a limited, time-conditioned, human fashion."³⁴

Jesus' was a limited human mind, culturally conditioned and relativised. It operated with the images and words available in its small world of first century Judaism in colonial Palestine. Jesus had no knowledge or foreknowledge of everything. He was not consulting his future and performing; he was not acting out a drama all written in full³⁵. He was not born with a blue-print of his ministry under his arm. The Gospels depict Jesus as touring the length and breadth of his land announcing the coming Kingdom but also gaining first hand knowledge of the people's plight. It was thus that Jesus could shape his services as response to the call of the hour and give to the message of the Kingdom relevant and concrete expression. The elaboration of the temptation scene in Matthew and Luke shows that there existed in the social milieu in which Jesus lived more options than one for the ministry

33. id., *COS*, pp. 42-43; id., *JBC*, p. 195

34. id., *JBC*, p. 195.

35. *Ibid*, p. 162 163

and its style. It is significant that the choice Jesus made after rejecting the path of power, pelf and pride actually corresponds to what he took note of in his travels:

"And when he saw the crowds he felt sorry of them because they were harassed and dejected, (worried and helpless; prostrate from exhaustion) like sheep without a shepherd... (Mt 9: 36; cf Jn 10).

Jesus didn't know all in advance...He didn't come from outside with a clear understanding of our problem and a ready-made solution to it. He came from within Judaism, discovered what the problem was and assumed responsibility for it. He found God in human need."³⁶

Jesus learned things, and he needed to learn, to seek, to doubt, to question, to listen, and continually to re-adjust his knowledge to fresh facts and new experiences. Day by day he learned to obey through what he had to endure. He learned by trial and error what could not be learned otherwise. He increased in wisdom, in stature and in favour with God and men. There was a history of his knowledge, a process of development and growth in his understanding of himself, his destiny and his mission³⁷. The grasp of who one is develops as one's life unrolls in history and personal encounters multiply. Only gradually did Jesus acquire full consciousness of his personal being; he did so "in and through the life in which he fulfilled himself"³⁸. He grew as he searched the scriptures for his Father's will, and as he searched history and read the signs of the times to find and fulfil his concrete task (Mk 13:28-31; Lk 21:29-31).

Sharer in our ignorance, hesitations and apprehensions, Jesus was capable of surprise and wonder as well as of anger and tears. He was amazed at the lack of faith of the people of his home town Nazareth, while the

36. *Ibid*, p. 211-212.

37. Hans Urs von Balthasar; *A Theology of History* (New York, 1963) pp. 31-32; K. Rahner: *Theological Investigations V* (Baltimore, 1966) pp. 203-207, 215; E. Schillebeeckx: *Christ The Sacrament of Encounter with God* (New York, 1963) p. 20

38. P. De Roca: *COS*, p. 63; I. Ellacuria, in Bonino, *op. cit.*, p. 82

faith of an outsider, a Roman soldier, astonished him by its thoroughness. The calculated callousness of religious people made him indignant, but at the grief of friends his soul heaved a sigh and wept (Mk 6:5-6; 3:5; Mt 8:5-13; Jn 11:33-35). The story of the agony in the garden illustrates the fact that Jesus had to struggle through life to see his situation from God's point of view and to accept that view. Jesus had to contend with crisis as happened when popular enthusiasm provoked by his initial preaching in Galilee waned and opposition began to gather strength, forcing him to withdraw from his homeland. That Jesus was subject to temptation is well attested. To be tempted is to come face to face with God as well as with forces opposed to God. It implies "a certain margin for illusion" and room for deception by demon. It implies freedom and the possibility of choice among various alternatives and the possibility of a mistaken option³⁹. Such growing and groping consciousness, so much like that of any human being sojourning in this twilight of history, is a decisive disclosure of the truly human in Jesus Christ.

6. My God, my God, why...?

Jesus' humanity is perhaps best seen and appreciated when it stands face to face with God in an encounter of faith. Faith is an encounter in which the human reality grasps itself as truly human and as radically in process of being loved into existence and spoken to by God. It is within a faith relationship that the human reaches out for the deepest in its own self and tends at the same time towards its highest destiny. Within the faith the human matures to wholeness. Now Jesus was a man of godly fear and faith⁴⁰. He was one who heard God's word and heeded it; heeded it so well that it became the very basis and substance or content of his life and Self. To Jesus the Word of God was God's will. To hear God's word was to do God's will. To have faith, then, meant to obey God and collaborate with him in realizing his project for the world.

39. L. Boff, art. cit., in Bonino, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16

40. Cf. James P. Mackey: *op. cit.*, pp. 159-171

just as Moses' faith consisted in his obedient co-operation with God in the work of the people's liberation. Jesus said,

"It is not those who say to me, 'Lord, Lord', who will enter the Kingdom... but the person who does the will of my Father..." (Mt 7:21-27; 25:31-46; Lk 11:28).

Jesus himself was a doer. When he learned obedience through what he suffered he learned faith. Through his sustained struggle unto death his faith was perfected and he became the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Heb 5:7-9; 12:2).

The faith-obedience of Jesus, rooted as it was in the ordinary realities of everyday existence, found expression in the simple services he was always ready and glad to render. People in need could rely on his compassion and flock to him. They experienced him as someone bringing them relief from heavy yokes and painful burdens of laws, rites, fear and self-contempt which religions and states had placed on them over the years. Jesus communicated to them his own faith in a God who is love and compassion. He left them catch from him the contagion of trust and freedom in their approach to the Father. Through that faith he also challenged them to loving and forgiving without measure, to assuming responsibility for one another and for the future of the earth. Feel forgiven, said Jesus in effect; feel accepted and served; 'feel the grace of some human presence'; feel precious and treasured; and come thus to treasure people, treasure life, and hold the whole of creation precious; and come thus to sense God as grace, sense God as Abba, Father⁴¹. In a life-style of that kind, the rich humanity of Jesus expressed itself, enriching others and being enriched in turn.

Is not service often in danger of being used as stepping stones to power and as cover for domination? Turn these stones into bread, feed the masses, and then have your way with them. That is the demonic suggestion which Jesus resisted and overthrew. He fled from king-

⁴¹) Ibid, p.170.

ship. He refused to give himself titles. He remained basically silent about himself as may be seen from his core sayings and parables⁴². Jesus "spoke and acted without authority and... regarded 'the exercise of authority' as a pagan characteristic". Albert Nolan observes that truth was the only authority Jesus ever, if at all, appealed to. Jesus did not "make authority his truth, he made truth his authority."⁴³ Power sought ceaselessly to seduce Jesus or to destroy him (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 8:31-33; 9:38; 10:35-45; 11:27-33; Lk 4:23; 9:51-56; 12:13-14; Jn 7:2-3 and Mt 2:16-18; Mk 3:6; Lk 13:31-33; Jn 8:32, 45-50; 11:47-54). Jesus withstood the seduction of dominative power and excluded it from his fellowship, and therefore he was in the end liquidated by it. His death stands out for all time as a judgment on all imperial traditions and systems of exclusive power represented by Herods, Pilates, Temples, Conquerors, Apocalyptic War Managers, rich Ranches, Great Diners and Camelised Wealth.

But that death was above all a final affirmation and revelation of the authenticity of Jesus' humanity. We must note with George Casalis how the cross "has opened a breach once for all in the prison wall of the selfish will to power." There on the cross Jesus was not concerned about himself. He was rather fighting to the end to free human beings from every alienation. Henceforth the path of the human, the road to genuine and complete human personhood, lies through the heart of those who are willing to let go their hold on life for themselves so as to enable others to live. It passes through the heart and hands of all who, Jesus-like, are ready to fall into the furrow, are prepared for a *kenosis*, prepared to let go divine status, keen on becoming flesh, opting to be poor so that the impoverished and the dispossessed may be lifted up into life in abundance⁴⁴. What Christian Ducoque said of Christology may be said of the cross too: the cross "does

42) J Breech: *op.cit.* pp. 217-218

43) A. Nolan: *op. cit.*, pp. 121-124.

44) George Casalis: Jesus - Neither Abject Lord nor Heavenly Monarch, in Bonino, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-76.

not proclaim the death of God but the humanity of God"⁴⁵. Throughout his life, and therefore in his death, Jesus was the disclosure of God's humanity and God's kindness and love for humankind (Titus 3:4).

Jesus died with a loud cry and a question directed to God. "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" It is an agonizing cry, a word of protest, a searching criticism of God, a challenge to all mystic and religious experiences. It is the turning to God of a human heart wholly broken open. A bleeding appeal for a sign, a word. In that challengeful prayer the humanity of Jesus stood full stature, flaming forth as Other, facing God, summoning God to response, to responseability. Wrestling with the Nameless Mystery in the Night of Death: the essential radical way in which we can lay hold on the blessing of a free and full humanity. Trial of God before the last tide of life should ebb: the crucial inevitable path out of cheap theism on to the awesome Reality of Love which affirms us as Other and as free. There a man hung on the cross, facing God, assuming his full freedom and responsibility, gathering a wounded and alienated world to himself, and repairing with his blood its breach with God. In that hour, in that shattering question, the humanity of Jesus was coming to full blossom and final ripeness. Its challenge to God and us abides.

45) C. Ducoque, *Christologie* (Paris, 1968) p.41